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FALL STUFF

Creepy decor, cozy food & cool facts about crows

Check out the REAL SIMPLE HOME

(It's so darn pretty!)

Drew Barrymore designed a room for us!

FLIP OVER
FOR EVEN MORE IDEAS TO STEAL

OCTOBER 2025

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A Touch of Luxe

Designing a luxury bathroom is all in the details.

From the symmetrical sculpture of a freestanding bathtub to the dynamic contours of a tub filler to the elegant finish of a sink faucet, discover how well-crafted bathroom fixtures from House of Rohl, a sponsor of the 2025 REAL SIMPLE Home, can transform spaces into experiences.

An understated, freestanding bathtub positioned as the focal point of a space will evoke a spa-like, serene mood. In the 2025 REAL SIMPLE Home, designers placed the Victoria + Albert® Lussari® Freestanding Soaking Bathtub by House of Rohl® in front of bright, city-view windows for that five-star hotel bathroom feel.

Unexpected pairings can add polished, personal character to a smaller bathroom. In the 2025 REAL SIMPLE Home, the maroon marble counter and the gold ROHL® Amahle™ Widespread Bathroom Faucet from House of Rohl® combine to bring dimension and elevated style to the powder room.

Pure bathtub bliss begins with handcrafted, durable fixtures. A contemporary, floor-mounted faucet, like the ROHL® Lombardia™ Exposed Floor Mount Tub Filler from House of Rohl® is the perfect accompaniment to a minimalist freestanding tub.

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Let's change beauty

THE HOME ISSUE

october

PROP STYLING BY SOPHIA PAPPAS; DESIGN BY MANDY CHENG

features

60

The 2025 REAL SIMPLE Home

Our designers decorated a penthouse *and* a two-bedroom

80

Drew Barrymore Invites You to Prioritize Yourself

We talk with your favorite TV host/mogul/RS Home designer

84

These Vacations Are Totally Lit

Getaways for people who love to read as much as they love to travel

Photograph by Kelly Marshall

contents

stuff we love

21 Home Mix
Chic Halloween decor, front porch design tips, and a trending color combo

26 Clever Items
Little helpers to make your life a lot easier

27 The Books List
What to read next

28 Editor Raves
The bra, pan, and serum we can't stop talking about

30 Genius Beauty
Our beauty director's favorite new products

how to do things

33 Sweet Thing
Pistachio-honey toffee

36 Drinking with Jenna
There's a chardonnay for every wine drinker

38 Clean This
The right way to wash makeup brushes

39 Organize This
Straighten up all those cords, chargers, and gadgets

40 Pets
How to take care of your pup's pearly whites

43 Simple Twists
Trick out your car for a smooth road trip

how we live

47 Away
Five globe-trotters show us their most beloved souvenirs

52 Modern Manners
Great advice from *Today* cohosts Jenna Bush Hager and Justin Sylvester

54 First Person
Singer-songwriter Tracy Bonham on her breast cancer diagnosis

59 Nerding Out
Why crows are so flocking cool

what to cook

91 The Staple
All about maple syrup

92 5 Easy Dinners
Veggie frittatas, shrimp sushi bowls, and more

98 Better for You
Apple pie cookies!

on the cover

Cover Photograph by Landon McMahon

Valspar Rosy Sandstone 2001-7C Paint, from $40 per gallon; lowes.com

FLIP SECTION

ideas book

F1 Smart Ideas to Steal from the REAL SIMPLE Home
Including easy DIYs, decorating advice, and organizing strategies

6 Editor's Note **10 Your Words**
14 REAL SIMPLE Right Now **100 Minor Issues, Major Opinions**

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EDITOR'S NOTE

Must Be Nice!

HOW ABOUT THAT REAL SIMPLE Home (page 60)? Isn't she pretty? Our editors marshal a bunch of best-in-class designers to create a beautiful world of ideas you can let seep into your brain and simmer there until the moment you need to replace something in your own home or just want a change. The team makes it all happen with talent and speed and attention to detail. It's a time crunch and tons of pressure, yet they somehow keep their cool, get it done, and stay nice in the process. In fact, the RS team is kind of known for that: being nice to one another and to everybody else.

Lately I've been thinking a lot about kindness. I believe it's most people's default setting once we get off the internet. I recently saw ample proof of that when I moved, due to a life change that was very hard. I picked up a lot of great stuff for my new home on Facebook Marketplace, and with one exception, the people I encountered IRL were lovely and more than happy to help lug and lift. One woman steam-cleaned a sofa before I arrived. A couple helped me carry a lavishly heavy chest of drawers down a few flights of stairs. An entire block in Scarsdale, New York, disassembled a barely used grill so I could get it into my Subaru station wagon.

Another kind person? Drew Barrymore, who created a room for the REAL SIMPLE Home. (Quick side story: As divorced working moms of daughters, she and I share a mantra with Homer Simpson. "Do it for her." It's from the final scene of one of my favorite episodes of *The Simpsons*, and it's a salve for the working parent who feels guilty about leaving their kids each day, a reminder of why we bother. If that's you, go find the clip on YouTube.) Drew was one of the nicest people I've ever interviewed (never mind famous people—just people!). She's how you imagine her to be, only more so. She leads with kindness and makes whoever she's focused on feel good. She makes us all feel good.

I hope this issue makes you feel good too. There's an awful lot of nonsense out there, but not in here. REAL SIMPLE is about ideas and inspiration, design and DIYs. Treating others well, and yourself. Stay awhile and enjoy the calm, the pause, and the kind vibes.

Lauren Iannotti
EDITOR IN CHIEF

LET'S CONNECT!
Follow me on Instagram at **@laureniannotti.**

See You in Kingston, New York!

If you'll be in the area between October 10 and 12, check out Field + Suppy. It's a cool and beautiful makers market on the Hudson River, and several of us from REAL SIMPLE will be there. We'll even have a tent, where we'll offer all sorts of crafty, hands-on workshops. Get more information at fieldandsupply.com.

HAIR AND MAKEUP BY STEFANIE LAMM-SIU FOR CREATIVE MANAGEMENT

Photograph by Felix Wong

WHEN THE CLOCK STRIKES DINNER, THINK STOUFFER'S.

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What's your favorite scary movie and why?

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"I absolutely cannot—and do not—watch horror movies! But I still have an answer: the *Nightmare on Elm Street* movies. I watched them when I was little, and after seeing the sausages morph into heads, I couldn't eat pizza for years. They shouldn't be my favorite, but they are!"
—Melissa Matthews

"Horror is my favorite genre! The *Saw* series is my go-to if I'm looking for gore. For lasting creep factor, it has to be *It Follows* or *The Autopsy of Jane Doe*."
—Hana Hong

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"*The Birds*! Because it terrified my husband. When we first started dating, he once put his arm around me during a walk. I found it endearing...until he began pushing me in front of him. I realized he was using me as a human shield to protect him from a flock of birds!"
—Tiffany Ehasz

"I vote for the old-time classic *The Shining*. The creepy twins! And Jack! Doesn't get better than that!"
—Susan Schwartzman

"The horror movie that haunts me the most is Stephen King's *Maximum Overdrive*. I am terrified of driving next to or between semis to this day!"
—Ashley Connor

ILLUSTRATIONS BY CLARE OWEN

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YOUR WORDS

If you had an extra hour every day, how would you spend it?

Taking the time for a really relaxing meditation. I try for small moments throughout the day when I need to calm down or recharge. A whole hour would be amazing!

NOELLE ALBANESE-LEVIN
NEW ROCHELLE, NEW YORK

Having an even longer chat with my grandmother, who just turned 99 and still has unlimited stories to tell!

TABITHADUMAS11

Bending and stretching—good for the mind, body, and spirit.

FLOEKLI_AND_SIDNEY

Lying on the grass and watching the sky.

VICTROLA.EMRU

With my family. We all seem so busy all the time. An extra hour with them would be wonderful.

EGF091162

Embroidery. I usually allocate about 45 minutes a day, but the time goes so fast, and I'm sorry to put my project down. Some of my designs are simple, and others are more elaborate and complex (looking at you, canvas sneakers!).

KIM KEBSCHULL OTTEN
RALEIGH, NORTH CAROLINA

Inspiring others with handwritten letters. These days, a note of encouragement received through the mail can be a nice surprise and foster the belief that good things do still happen in this chaotic world.

JUDITH LADGUENE JONES
LYNBROOK, NEW YORK

Taking a class—like a language, art, or music course—and learning something new. I'm very social, so the class would have to be in person. Even if the subject is a bust, I might make a new friend.

DENISE FLINN
HOUSTON

Connecting with someone, either in person or on the phone, who I don't talk to every day so they know I'm thinking of them. It could be a neighbor, a friend, a distant cousin, or a former coworker.

JESSICA MILAM
HIGHLAND, ILLINOIS

Being more consistent with my workout schedule.

CHRISTINE SABEL
GILBERT, ARIZONA

Illustration by Abbey Lossing

Gardening in my yard. It's a wonderful way to step away from our worries.

CARON CASTAGNETTA
PETALUMA, CALIFORNIA

Reflecting upon the good things that have taken place in the previous 24 hours. Life is so busy that we rarely have time to think about all that is good.

SHEILA KAPLAN
SILVER SPRING, MARYLAND

Grooming and pampering myself. Both are always last on my list.

DENISE R. PRATHER
BATON ROUGE, LOUISIANA

Hunting for vintage finds! I'm a mom of three and started an online vintage store three years ago. Between driving everyone around, feeding everyone, and everything else, I would love to have the time to find treasures for my shop!

STEPHANIE TAVANI
BROOKHAVEN, GEORGIA

Reading. I buy books whenever my husband and I travel, mostly about the area we're visiting and its history. I have over 1,000 unread books. I'd like to think I could make a serious dent in the to-be-read pile!

SALLY L. McCOMBS
OLEAN, NEW YORK

Sitting on my front porch and **chatting with my neighbors** as they walk by with their kids and dogs. Everyone is always so busy, so it'd be nice to slow down and have friendly conversations.

RENEE SEBESTYEN
DURANGO, COLORADO

I'd finish writing my fantasy novel. I hope to have it published and develop it into a series!

CLSSCCAROLINE

Sitting outside and listening to the birds sing while I cross-stitch.

MARY CAY COLLOPY
MURRIETA, CALIFORNIA

I'd use it as unscheduled time! I would treat it as a gift and not plan anything. Ahhh!

KAREN SMITH
EVANSTON, ILLINOIS

NEXT QUESTION

What's your favorite end-of-year tradition?
Send an email (and a photo, if you want!) to **yourwords@realsimple.com** and let us know your answer. Your response could appear on these pages.

READER OF THE MONTH

Marielys Garcia Daniels, 41

EVENT PLANNER
CHEVERLY, MARYLAND
ELLEEVENTS.DC

What's your favorite tradition?
About 15 years ago, my immediate family started scheduling biannual family photo sessions. We didn't grow up taking family photos, but it is neat now to look back at the portraits and see everyone's evolution.

Your favorite family recipe:
I have so many cherished Dominican recipes, especially from my maternal grandmother, who was an amazing cook. Sancocho (a stew with meat and root veggies) is my favorite, and I can have it any time of the year.

Most recent bargain:
I found a vintage candy dispenser on a neighborhood walk a few days before our kids' candy-themed birthday party. It was the perfect complement to the day, and it cost us absolutely nothing!

What's something you've recently stopped doing?
Snoozing through my alarms. As a result, I've been able to start my days with a morning walk. Morning movement feels so much better, and that dose of a.m. sun is absolutely golden. I love starting my day outside—just me, my sneaks, and my thoughts.

COURTESY OF MARIELYS GARCIA DANIELS

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REAL SIMPLE Right Now

News You Can Use, Timely Tips & a Bit of Fun

Pictured above: Chard with Anchovies, Olives, and Tomato

LEARN A NEW TRICK

How to Boil Water (for Pasta)

There really is an art to it! In the new cookbook *Six Seasons of Pasta,* Joshua McFadden shares his no-fail method: Fill a six-quart pot with a gallon of water and a quarter cup of kosher salt (ideally Diamond Crystal). Bring to a boil. It doesn't matter if you salt the water at the beginning or right before adding the pasta, he explains—just be consistent. You know, so you don't forget entirely or accidentally salt twice. "Add the noodles, slap on the lid, and then, once the rolling boil resumes, remove the lid so you can monitor the progress of your pasta more easily." (His method is for eight ounces of dried pasta, but our food director confirms it works great for a whole package too.) Boiled water, made! *$40; hachettebookgroup.com*

READER DISCOUNT

Save on Article Furniture!

There are some stylish pieces you might like in the REAL SIMPLE Home (page 60). So we got you $50 off your first purchase of $100 or more. Go to article.com/realsimple for more info.

TAKE CARE

Goodbye, Halos

With daylight saving time nearly over, we have lots of in-the-dark driving ahead of us, which can be tough if you see halos around headlights. Is that you? You may have an astigmatism, says Sophia Visanji, an optometrist in New York City. The good news: Your eye doctor can correct it with glasses or contacts, so visit them ASAP.

EXCERPTED FROM *SIX SEASONS OF PASTA* BY JOSHUA McFADDEN WITH MARTHA HOLMBERG (ARTISAN BOOKS). COPYRIGHT © 2025. PHOTOGRAPHS BY AJ MEEKER. ILLUSTRATIONS BY ABE NAYLOR. CHAIR: COURTESY OF MANUFACTURER

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ATTENTION, TRAVELERS!

It's Time for a Vacay

Airline travel is down compared with last year, according to data from aviation analytics firm Cirium. Mike Arnot, a spokesperson for the company, says that could be good news for you. "When an airline sees that bookings are down, they will typically lower the fares a bit in order to get people in those seats," he says. (For logistical reasons, it's unlikely that an airline would cut back on the number of flights.) "I anticipate that there'll be some great flight deals this fall for customers, because the supply is there, and the demand seems to be falling off a little bit." Who wants to meet us in Paris?

DO GOOD

Pawsitively Helpful

October is Adopt a Shelter Dog Month. Let's celebrate by helping! If you can't bring a new furry friend into your home, sharing available pups on your social media is the next best thing, says Katy Hansen, a spokesperson for Animal Care Centers of NYC. "You might be the bridge that connects someone in your circle with a pet who needs a home," she says. "I don't know of any shelter that has an advertising budget, so anything you can do to help get the word out is a lifesaver!"

DIRECT QUOTE

How Heidi Klum Washes Off All That Halloween Makeup

"I go right into the shower. The heat of the water is the most important thing, because sometimes I see people, and they're wiping and they're wiping and it's too harsh! Really get under the hot water, and be gentle! I have one of those silicone scrubbers, which I use with cleanser. It has little scrubbing nubs on it and, on the other side, suction cups that stick to the wall, so it's always there." *—Heidi Klum, Halloween fanatic, pro face washer, model, and TV personality*

ILLUSTRATION: ANDREA MONGIA; GETTY IMAGES (3)

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TRENDS TO TRY

Your New Fall Uniform

Dressing for this time of year tends to feel impossible. To help, we asked our friend and professional stylist Stephanie Tricola to put together a casual outfit that can work for nearly any outing. Yep, low-rise jeans and pointy shoes are back, she says. Copy this whole outfit or wear a few pieces at a time and you'll be totally on-trend—and incredibly comfortable.

Blake Shoes, $179; andreassous.com Suede Boxy-Crop Jacket, $525; madewell.com Low Loose Jeans, $108; levi.com Jersey Crew Neck Long Sleeve Striped T-Shirt, $17; muji.us Liv Shoulder Bag, $258; katespade.com

THIS JUST IN

Say Cheezzz

A crumbly blue cheese or a gooey Brie might be the secret to a good (Gouda?) morning. A recent study analyzing data from more than 400,000 people linked cheese consumption with a 28% lower risk of sleep apnea. More research is needed, but the authors theorize that nutrients in cheese may have a positive effect on markers in the body connected to apnea (like testosterone and diastolic blood pressure). Experts say maintaining a healthy weight is essential for reducing sleep apnea risk. So moderation, yes. But also: cheese!

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stuff we love

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ADD TO CART

EERILY CUTE

No tricks here! Just some boo-tiful products to help get your home into the Halloween spirit.

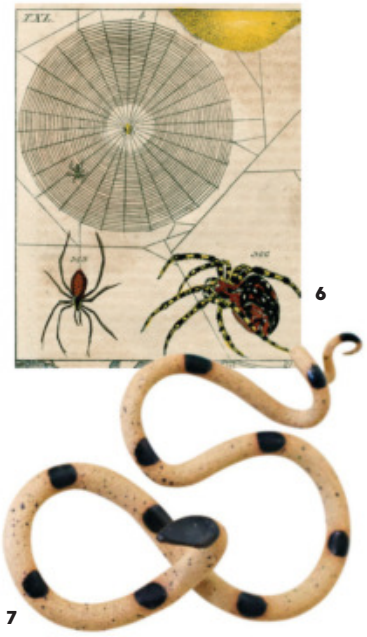
BY HANNAH BAKER

Mystic Icon Taper Candles, $36 for 2, and Adelle Snake Taper Candle Holders, from $38 each; anthropologie.com Bethany Lowe Ghost Bucket, $87; bonjourfete.com

PROP STYLING BY SOPHIA PAPPAS

Photograph by Ted Cavanaugh

1 *Halloween Black Oak Tree, $179; potterybarn.com*
2 *Spider Web Brass Coasters, $32 for 4; shopterrain.com*
3 *Skull Ice Mold, $15 for 2; williams-sonoma.com*
4 *Scorpio Brass Cocktail Picks, $17 for 4; cb2.com*
5 *Spiderwebs Handmade Linen Cocktail Napkins, $60 for 4; etsy.com/shop/25thandmag*
6 *Spider Web Tray, $195; johnderian.com*
7 *Ceramic Snake, from $22; carterandrose.com*



MISTAKES YOU DIDN'T KNOW YOU WERE MAKING

Front Porch Pitfalls

Welcome! Designer Emily Anderson of O'Hara Interiors, headquartered in Minneapolis, helps boost your curb appeal.

BY TESS ABRAHAM-MACHT

You're Using Too Much White

"The all-white trend has started to go out of style, both inside and outside of homes," Anderson says. Good! Because the upkeep is *hard*. For flooring, she likes neutral colors, like medium brown. (Note: Go too light or dark and footprints will be obvious.) For furniture, teak and metal are durable no-brainers.

You've Got Lackluster Lighting

A shadowy entryway takes your porch from charming to chilling. To fix that, flank the front door with sconces, hang a fixture over the entry, or place standing lanterns on either side of the welcome mat, Anderson says. "Exterior lighting is like jewelry for your home," she adds. It elevates the whole look.

You're Overdoing It on the Kitsch

Holiday decor is great in the moment, but the rest of the time, lean into the season. In autumn, Anderson recommends spiffing up your porch with plants or textiles in rich, earthy tones, like burnt orange, mustard, and maroon. "Halloween is just one night of the year," she says. "Fall lasts a few months."

COLOR COMBO OF THE MONTH

Petal Pink + Marigold

Bolder than blush and more sophisticated than bubblegum, petal pink plays surprisingly well with marigold. In this bedroom from Dabito (@dabito), a designer based in Los Angeles and New Orleans, the colors anchor a power clash of florals and graphic patterns, while luxe velvet and silk add elegance. To follow his lead, bring in accessories in softer variations of the two shades, like muddied mauve and muted mustard, and finish things off with some wooden accents. —*H.B.*

Shop the Shades

Polspotten Twister Side Table, $480; abchome.com Skye Arm Chair, $499; urbanoutfitters.com Straight Empire Shade, $145; us.pooky.com Balance Vase, $109; fazeek.co Petal Pink Napkin, $35 for 2; mollymahon.com Darcy Daybed, $1,748; anthropologie.com Natalia Milk Jug, $38, and Radicchio Serving Bowl, $132; porta-nyc.com

PORCH: COURTESY OF O'HARA INTERIORS/TROY THIES
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THE ART OF COLOR PAIRING

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Discover elegant color combos—like this dreamy duo of bedroom hues—with Sherwin-Williams color samples.

When you're ready to start your next home improvement project, Sherwin-Williams has you covered. Stylish color combinations—such as blush-toned **Likeable Sand** and calming **Kestrel White**—offer a refined way to reimagine a room. Let the following tips empower you to achieve that perfect harmony of color.

EXPLORE COMPLEMENTARY HUES

A curated duet of colors, such as a modern neutral and a warm white, can turn a bedroom into a sleep sanctuary. The first step on your paint journey is to dive into the exciting possibilities. With **FREE color chips** from Sherwin-Williams, you can experiment with a number of different shades. For the accent alcove in this bedroom, Likeable Sand offers subtle red undertones that exude a cozy feel and let statement-making pieces shine.

NARROW DOWN YOUR TOP PICKS

When choosing a beautiful color for your walls, Sherwin-Williams **Peel & Stick samples** allow you to explore how a hue will work in your space. It's easy to move them around the room to preview how a color looks and feels in different areas throughout the day. That way, you can feel confident in your final choice. For example, note how Kestrel White has just the right hint of pink to complement the rosiness of Likeable Sand, tying together the room's soothing ambience.

Ready to get started? Visit swsamples.com to order Peel & Stick samples and FREE color chips.

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Clever Items
Little Helpers to Make Your Life a Lot Easier

BY HANNAH BAKER

1

CAR CADDY

Set this up on the passenger seat for a solo trip or between the kids in the back, and it'll keep snacks and drinks level. The strap stretches enough to hold a box of pizza! *Drive-N-Dine Car Caddy, $40; uncommongoods.com*

2

MAGNETIC TABLE

No tools needed! This coffee table snaps into place thanks to powerful magnets inside the legs. Pick from three colors—red clay (above), sand, and forest green. *Coffee Table, $1,100; rukastudio.com*

3

VACUUM PACKED

Bring more stuff on your next trip with this backpack, which has a built-in vacuum system to compress clothes instantly. It's got loads of sections, and the main one is expandable. *Backvac Pro, $199; mybackvac.com*

4

PURE BRILLIANCE

The filter in this 2½-gallon stainless-steel water filtration system targets lead, forever chemicals, microplastics, and 50-plus other contaminants. Glug, glug. *Countertop System, $399; rorra.com*

5

FUR FIGHTER

Do you have pet hair... everywhere? The aluminum scraper uses friction to grab fur from carpets, sofas, and more. You can even brush Sir Fluff with it! *Uproot Clean Cleaner Pro, $20; amazon.com*

6

SOAP STAR

Developed by pro chefs, this scrub smells like cardamom and iris, and it has yeast enzymes to neutralize food odors on your hands (garlic! onion! fish!) without drying out your skin. *After-Cooking Hand Scrub, $25; trynaomi.com*

PRODUCT IMAGES COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS

The Books List Top Picks for Book Club & Beyond

BY KRISTYN KUSEK LEWIS

Satire with Heart

In ***What a Time to Be Alive*** by **Jade Chang** *(The Wangs vs. The World),* 30-something Lola Treasure Gold is not doing great. Unemployed, she's living in her childhood home in the Hollywood Hills, and one of her best friends has just died in a skateboarding accident. Then Jade unwittingly stars in a viral video that launches her to fame as a self-help influencer, all while she tries to navigate her own actual, complicated reality. This hilarious examination of wellness culture is also an insightful take on where we truly find meaning.

Immigrant Song

Pick a Color, the new novel by **Souvankham Thammavongsa** *(How to Pronounce Knife),* centers on a day in the life of Ning, a nail salon owner whose privileged clients only know her and her coworkers as "Susan." But Ning is, of course, not just an anonymous manicurist. She's a retired boxer whose sharp and witty observations about her circumstances come to a roaring head as the workday passes. A powerful novel that is profoundly of-the-moment, this quick read (less than 200 pages!) is not to be missed.

Chance of a Lifetime

Layla, 33, has always dreamed of a dance career. When she's invited to spend nine months as the choreographer in residence at a prestigious Vermont arts institute, she accepts, though she'll have to leave her day job—and her husband—behind in Brooklyn. Soon she discovers that being a Black artist in an ultra-White community comes with challenges, as does maintaining a long-distance marriage. ***Little Movements*** by **Lauren Morrow** brilliantly explores the ways striving toward a goal can alter how we define ourselves.

Coming-of-Age Tearjerker

Remember being young and in love…and maybe not making the best decisions? ***Heart the Lover*** by **Lily King** *(Writers & Lovers)* is a tender look at that rite of passage. The narrator is nicknamed Jordan by Sam and Yash, two guys she befriends her senior year of college. What begins as friendly banter in their 17th-century literature class turns into more, and she eventually finds herself at the center of a love triangle that will have years-long repercussions. Keep your tissues handy for this moving story that goes deep.

A Story of Small-Town Secrets

Set in fictional Bonhomie, Ohio, ***Buckeye*** by **Patrick Ryan** introduces us to Cal Jenkins, who lives a quiet life working in his father-in-law's hardware store. One day a stranger, Margaret Salt, bursts in, demanding he turn on the radio. They hear that the Allied forces have claimed victory, signaling the end of World War II, and they share a spontaneous kiss. As the novel unfurls over several decades, a secret emerges that will impact Margaret's and Cal's families forever, revealing how one small decision can change everything.

PROP STYLING BY SOPHIA PAPPAS

Photograph by Ted Cavanaugh

Editor Raves 3 Things We Can't Stop Talking About

Thirdlove T-Shirt Bra

"As a wide-rib-caged, small-boobed girly, I've learned it's pretty hard to find my size, let alone variety. But Thirdlove has lots of styles in all the measurements. While I like all their bras, the T-shirt one has become my go-to. It's so comfortable, I don't feel the need to take it off as soon as I get home."
—Melissa Matthews, senior features editor $72 each; thirdlove.com

Hexclad Hybrid Fry Pan

"I have three sizes, and they're the most-used items in my kitchen. The little one (seven inches) is great for eggs, and the bigger ones are fantastic for stir-fries and sautéing. I've had them for years, and they still look brand-new." *—Samantha Leffler, senior food editor From $109; hexclad.com*

KraveBeauty Great Barrier Relief

"I started using this serum my senior year of college and haven't strayed since. It takes care of pimples, redness, itchiness, and more. It's also from an AAPI-owned company that prioritizes sustainability. Clear skin forever!"
—Ria Bhagwat, lifestyle editor $28; kravebeauty.com

PROP STYLING BY SOPHIA PAPPAS; HEADSHOTS BY JORDAN PROVOST; PRODUCT IMAGES COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS

Photograph by Ted Cavanaugh

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Genius Beauty Our beauty director tries *all* the products. These are her current faves.

BY HEATHER MUIR MAFFEI

1

MIST OPPORTUNITY

I'm taking advantage of this hair and body spritz, with natural oils that don't bother my son's sensitive nose. And, yay, the milky emulsion hydrates skin. *Josie Maran Fragrance Mist, $26 each; sephora.com*

Photograph by Ted Cavanaugh

REAL SIMPLE® BEAUTY PICKS 2025

2

EYE OPENER

I swipe and blend for a sophisticated wash of color that won't crease—even on my oily lids. *Makeup by Mario Master Mattes Long-Wearing Cream Eyeshadow, $25 each; sephora.com*

3

BRIGHT IDEA

It's SPF you'll want to wear! It comes out like whipped cream! It prevents new sun spots *and* helps brighten old ones! *Dr. Idriss Major Fade Disco Block SPF 50, $38; sephora.com*

4

SPRING AWAKENING

Instead of straightening my curls, I've learned to love them thanks to this cream. I comb it through damp hair for soft, shiny spirals. *Dove Amino Curl Define Curl Cream, $10; walmart.com*

5

CONTROL STICK

Meet my bun's new BFF. I run the waxlike balm along my hairline to instantly tame baby hairs. Somehow it never causes crunch or flakes. *Grande Cosmetics GrandeHair Slick Back Stick with Castor Oil, $20; ulta.com*

About Heather

With more than 18 years in the beauty biz, the busy mom of two (hi, Bean and Georgie!) has tried almost every serum, balm, and potion out there. She's always down to chat about facial hair.

PROP STYLING BY SOPHIA PAPPAS; HEADSHOT: FELIX WONG; PRODUCT IMAGES COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS

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how to do things

IDEAS, DIYS & REALLY GOOD TIPS

SWEET THING

PISTACHIO-HONEY TOFFEE

This is better than anything you'd get while trick-or-treating. Trust us.

BY ANNA THEOKTISTO

Photographs by Morgan Hunt Glaze

FOOD STYLING BY JULIAN HENSARLING; PROP STYLING BY PRISCILLA MONTIEL

Pistachio-Honey Toffee

ACTIVE TIME **25 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **2 HOURS, 25 MINUTES**
MAKES **48 (2-INCH) PIECES**

- 1½ cups chopped salted, roasted pistachios (from a 12-oz. pkg.), divided
- 2 cups (396 g) granulated sugar
- 2 cups (4 sticks) unsalted butter, cut into 1-Tbsp. slices
- 2 Tbsp. honey
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. pure vanilla extract

LINE a large rimmed baking sheet with parchment paper. Sprinkle 1 cup pistachios evenly over parchment.

PLACE sugar, butter, ¼ cup water, honey, and salt in a large saucepan or Dutch oven. Bring to a boil over medium, stirring often, until butter is melted, 4 to 5 minutes. Continue to cook over medium, stirring constantly, until mixture is deep golden brown and a candy thermometer reads 305°F to 310°F, 12 to 18 minutes.

REMOVE saucepan from heat and carefully stir in cinnamon and vanilla. Pour hot toffee evenly over pistachios on baking sheet. Let cool slightly, about 2 minutes. Sprinkle with remaining ½ cup pistachios. Let cool completely, about 2 hours.

BREAK toffee into pieces. Store between pieces of parchment in an airtight container for up to 2 weeks.

THE CASE FOR A CANDY THERMOMETER

If you don't have one already, we recommend you get on that. It's useful when making toffee and caramel, when deep-frying, when whipping up meringue frosting—basically anytime you're bringing something to temperature on the stove. We like OXO's Candy & Deep Fry Thermometer ($21; oxo.com). But! There *is* a work-around for this recipe: Put a bowl of cold water next to the stove. When the toffee is deep golden brown, carefully use a spoon to drop a bit into the water. If it hardens immediately, it's ready. Not super precise, but it works in a pinch!

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DRINKING WITH JENNA

Chardonnay All the Way!

The most popular white in the U.S. is also its most maligned. Don't listen to the haters! This vino deserves a second look (and taste).

BY JENNA HELWIG

Photograph by Morgan Hunt Glaze

I HATE CHARDONNAY. I also adore chardonnay. Unlike many wine varietals that stay mostly consistent regardless of where and how they're produced, chardonnay is a shape-shifter. Made at one winery, it's lean, crisp, and mineral tinged, with a whiff of honeysuckle and green apple. At another, it tastes like an oak-scented butter bomb. At a third, it falls somewhere in the middle, well balanced, nutty, and peerless when paired with a rich roast chicken.

This flavor crapshoot has given the ubiquitous white a bit of a bad rap—pretty unfairly. To clear things up, I spent an afternoon with New York City–based Aldo Sohm. He's the wine director at the three-Michelin-starred Le Bernardin, a partner at Aldo Sohm Wine Bar, and the author of *Wine Simple* and the upcoming *Wine Simple: Perfect Pairings* (out in November), so I figured he was the best person to stand up for chardonnay. Here are my notes.

Two Big Factors Help Determine the Taste of a Chardonnay

One is where the grapes are grown, Sohm says. "In warmer climates, the grapes have lower acidity and higher sugar levels and, as a result, higher alcohol. In cooler regions, the sugars don't spike that quickly, and the juice has higher acidity."

The second factor is the barrels the wine is aged in. Oak can give wine a vanilla quality and a warm, smoky element, Sohm says. Older-oak barrels impart less of this flavor than new-oak ones. And chardonnay aged in stainless-steel tanks (called "unoaked") lacks it altogether.

To all the sauvignon blanc drinkers who hate chardonnay: You just haven't found the right one. Meet Chablis.

Chardonnay Is Actually a Wine with Many Names

Chardonnay grapes are used to make wines labeled chardonnay, yes. They're also responsible for Chablis, Pouilly-Fuissé, Meursault, and white Burgundy. And they're usually the only grapes in blanc de blancs Champagne. In fact, along with pinot noir and pinot meunier, chardonnay grapes are a key component in almost every bottle of Champagne. So if you like Champagne, you like chardonnay!

If You Want Something Crisp & Clean, Try a Chablis

To all the sauvignon blanc drinkers who hate chardonnay: You just haven't found the right one. Meet Chablis, arguably the driest and most mineral-driven wine in the chard family. Chablis is a relatively cool-weather area in the Burgundy region of France, where winemakers produce unoaked or, in some cases, lightly oaked wine from chardonnay grapes. The slightly saline quality makes it especially good with oysters and other lean seafood, Sohm says. "It's also refreshing to have on its own."

If You Want Full Bodied but Not Super Oaky, You Have Options

Find a bottle of chardonnay from the Santa Rita Hills or Santa Barbara regions of California, Oregon, Burgundy (besides Chablis), or Austria. While you might notice a whisper of oak or vanilla, neither flavor hits you over the head. "These wines are a little fuller and rounder than ones like Chablis, but they still have good acidity, making them very food friendly," Sohm says. Try pairing them with seafood like sea bass, scallops, or lobster. They're robust enough to complement these foods while bringing freshness and spark to the glass.

If You Want Buttery, Look for Wines from Napa Valley

For all my shade on classic buttery chardonnays, many, many people love them, and that's fantastic! Typically aged in new oak for maximum oaky, toasty, vanilla flavor, they're often from warmer-weather regions, like Napa Valley and the Russian River Valley in California, Sohm says. "You can also find them in Argentina."

To Recap: There's a Chardonnay for Everyone

"It's helpful for a wine drinker to have a hint of curiosity, to be willing to explore," Sohm says. Meaning, don't discount any varietal right off the bat. When shopping, ask the salesperson to advise. At a restaurant with a not-helpful wine list? Ask your server for more info. Better yet, ask for a taste. Wine is subjective, and if it makes you happy, go for it. ■

About Jenna

REAL SIMPLE's food director and the author of five cookbooks, Jenna is an enthusiastic eater, drinker, and home cook. Her go-to cocktail is a Negroni, and her wine of choice is anything bubbly. Cheers!

FOOD STYLING BY JULIAN HENSARLING; PROP STYLING BY PRISCILLA MONTIEL; HEADSHOT: FELIX WONG

CLEAN THIS

REFRESH YOUR MAKEUP BRUSHES

You're probably not giving them enough TLC.

BY COLLEEN SULLIVAN

1

GET SOAPY

These poofy little brushes can hold a lot more than foundation, and not cleaning them could lead to a fungal, E. coli, or even staph infection—yikes! So about once a week (or after every use if you wear liquid makeup, like concealer), give them a quick, um, brushup. Skip the special formulas and just mix warm water with a bit of liquid hand soap or shampoo in a small bowl. Note: Steer clear of dish soap, which can dry out the bristles. Swirl each brush in the bowl and use your palm or fingers to massage the bristles.

2

RINSE & REPEAT

Run each brush under water with the bristles pointing downward. (Otherwise the water will get into the ferrule—the metal band that attaches the brush head to the handle—and could loosen the glue.) If the water doesn't come out clear, go back to the bowl and repeat as needed.

3

DRY THEM WELL

Squeeze out as much water as you can with a clean microfiber cloth. Let the brushes dry completely on a towel before using them again.

PROP STYLING BY SOPHIA PAPPAS

Photograph by Ted Cavanaugh

ORGANIZE THIS

Your Tangled Tech

Get that pile of gizmos, plugs, and cords in order with these smart lo-fi tips, and CTRL the chaos!

BY HANNAH BAKER

ZHSMYUP Data Cable Organizer Box, $13, and Fabrok Cable Management Box, $20; amazon.com

DECLUTTER & DONATE

Broken devices and frayed cords can do damage in a landfill, so recycle them through an e-waste program. (Apple has a great one; your town may as well.) As for old but working tablets, laptops, and phones, back them up and wipe them, then donate them to a shelter or school.

WRANGLE THE WIRES

Got any mystery cords that work with nothing you own? Recycle those too—we promise you won't miss them. Wrap up what's left, one at a time, and secure the bundles with binder clips or twist ties. Store anything you don't use frequently in a box with compartments.

LABEL YOUR BRICKS

Charging bricks (the parts that plug into the wall) have different wattages based on what they're meant to be paired with. Using a too-high wattage can potentially shorten the lifespan of some devices. So grab a Sharpie and label them, and no more mixing and matching.

CUT THOSE CORDS

Meaning cut them out of your line of sight! Use a cable management box (a lame but accurate name) to keep adapters within reach but wires off your counters and floors. You just might stop scrolling so much if your phone has a home that's not a plug next to the couch.

PROP STYLING BY JOSEPH WANEK

Photograph by Carson Downing

PETS

ABOUT THOSE TEEFIES

Are doggy dental issues having a moment?

BY LISA FREEDMAN

IN JUST THE LAST few months, three REAL SIMPLE staff pups have had to deal with serious dental problems. Poor Rusty, Pepper, *and* Leslie Knope needed to be put under for deep cleans and multiple extractions. (In Leslie's case, it was 38!!!) The surge seemed to come out of nowhere and had us scratching our heads—in addition to theirs. Feeling a little lost, we called up some experts to get some answers.

Why Are Doggy Dental Issues Such a Thing Now?

There are two main reasons, says Naomi Hoyer, DVM, associate professor of dentistry and oral surgery at Colorado State University's Veterinary Teaching Hospital. "Veterinary medicine is growing by leaps and bounds every decade, and the recognition of how chronic dental disease affects the body is one of those growing areas of understanding." Also: All these medical advancements mean our pups are living much longer than they used to. Yay! But periodontal disease—one of the most common issues to affect the mouth—often gets worse as pets age, Hoyer says. Not yay.

CWP, LLC/STOCKSY

Is It Just Us, or Do Small Dogs Seem to Have the Most Issues?

They do, says Courtney Campbell, DVM, a veterinary surgeon in Long Beach, California. "Small dogs have the same number of teeth as large dogs, 42, but they're packed into a much smaller mouth," he explains. "This crowding creates more nooks and crannies where bacteria and plaque can accumulate, making it harder to clean those areas effectively." Genetic factors are also at play. For instance, small breeds tend to keep their baby teeth longer, Campbell says, which can lead to problems like misalignment, extra crowding, and root infections.

So What's a Pawrent to Do?

"Daily toothbrushing is the most effective way to remove the plaque that triggers the onset of periodontal disease," Hoyer says. "But just like with people, toothbrushing is better started *before* severe gum infection and bone loss start." Begin brushing during puppyhood to help prevent major issues. If you missed that window, it's not too late. Get a resistant Rover warmed up to the idea by letting him smell and taste his toothpaste—which should be a dog-specific formula, with enzymes—for about a week before you put anything in his mouth. The next week, put a dab on your finger and apply it to his teeth. Build up to brushing the pearly whites in the front (with a special finger toothbrush) and, eventually, all of them. Alternatively, doggy dental wipes are like training wheels for toothbrushing, Campbell says. "They're less abrasive than a toothbrush and can help your dog get used to having his mouth handled." Or a trainer may be able to help.

When Is the Ideal Time to Do This?

"The best time is the time that works for you both," Campbell says. "Pick a moment when your dog is calm—perhaps after a walk or playtime." Be consistent and give him loads of praise afterward. As for good-job treats, try to hold off to let the enzymes do their thing. If you've gotta give him a little something, Campbell suggests a carrot stick, apple slice, or cauliflower floret.

Do Those Dental Treats Actually Help with Anything?

Yes! With every gnaw, dental treats help clear away plaque and tartar buildup. But they're not a replacement for brushing, experts say. Ditto for dental rinses and water additives. To make sure you're buying the most effective options, our vets suggest looking for products with the Veterinary Oral Health Council (VOHC) seal of acceptance. And by the way, those antlers often sold at pet shops as tooth scrubbers are a no-go. "They're too hard for teeth and can cause severe tooth fractures," Hoyer warns.

If your vet is telling you Wooferine needs to be put under for a deep clean that'll cost you four figures, you might wonder whether it's *truly* necessary.

Which Is Better: Wet or Dry Food?

Wet food can leave a residue, making brushing even more important. And while some dry food can *help* with tartar buildup, you still have to brush. Maybe your dog prefers a mix? Or maybe his tummy does? Talk to your vet to decide what's best for his oral and overall health. You might even ask about a prescription dental diet. "This kibble is specifically formulated and is often larger, with a unique texture that encourages chewing and helps scrape the teeth," Campbell says.

Is Over-Intervention a Concern?

If your vet is telling you Wooferine needs to be put under for a deep clean that'll cost you four figures, you might wonder whether it's *truly* necessary. And whether it will be covered by insurance. "Many policies are really good about covering trauma like tooth fractures, but getting coverage for periodontal disease is harder," Hoyer says. During the anesthetized procedure ($$), your vet can do a comprehensive oral exam, radiographs of the teeth and surrounding structures ($$), a full cleaning (more $$), and any necessary extractions ($$$). "Even though I have an electric toothbrush, brush twice daily, and floss, I have never gone to the dentist and *not* had them find an area that needs a little extra cleaning," Hoyer says. Now think about the fact that despite your best attempts, you're probably not being nearly as thorough with your pup. When in doubt, ask follow-up questions, get a second opinion if you want, and do your best to take care of that little dude. ■

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SIMPLE TWISTS

5 Tricks for Better Road-Tripping

Cruise through these ideas before you hit the highway.

BY LISA FREEDMAN

USE
Silicone Cupcake Liners
TO
Keep Cup Holders Clean

Even if you don't eat or drink in your car (we have questions!), schmutz still gets into those cup holders, which are often tacky to help drinks stay put and can be hard to clean out. Instead of trying to scrub inside a tight space, put a silicone cupcake liner into each holder. The liners are also kinda tacky, meaning they'll help catch the various messes, but they can be easily removed for cleaning!

USE
An Over-the-Door Shoe Organizer
TO
Display Toys for Little Kids

The best way to avoid the are-we-there-yets is to have a bunch of toys and stuffies on offer. And the best way to do that is to stash them in an over-the-door shoe organizer hung from the back of the seat in front of the kiddo. Get an inexpensive one, cut it down to size, and fill each pocket. (Or splurge on an actual back-of-seat organizer.) You can even sneak surprise treats in there for a long drive.

USE
A Cereal Container
TO
Corral Trash

Granola bar wrappers! Crossed-out to-do lists! Receipts you never asked for! Trash accumulates pretty darn quickly in the car. To get it under control—and out of every little compartment—pick up a cereal storage container. Instant makeshift trash can! Line it with a plastic bag if you want, and wedge it into a console or plunk it on the floor.

USE
Toothpaste
TO
Clean Your Headlights

Pearly whites? More like pearly *brights!* The stuff you brush your teeth with can degunk your dirty headlights. While any nongel toothpaste will do, one with baking soda is abrasive but gentle enough for the clear plastic lens. Squeeze at least a tablespoon onto each one and scrub with an old toothbrush. Then buff with a damp rag and finish with a wet sponge. Dry with a clean cloth and prepare to shine.

USE
A Carabiner
TO
Hold Your Bags

We've all had the entire contents of our purse empty out onto the car floor. Some turns really do appear out of nowhere! Rather than let your stuff flop around, hook a carabiner (one of those D-shaped metal rings that mountain climbers use) onto the post of the headrest behind you. You can clip your purse and grocery bags and whatnot onto the hardware before you pull out. But also, maybe slow down a bit? Safety first!

Illustrations by Sunny Eckerle

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AWAY

THE BEST SOUVENIR I EVER BOUGHT

Traveling is all about the memories—and the unique treasures we pick up along the way. No shame in a kitschy magnet or T-shirt, but we asked frequent fliers to tell us about the meaningful objects they've scored on their adventures around the globe.

AS TOLD TO MELISSA MATTHEWS

Illustrations by Andrea Mongia

"I found a painting that brings me so much joy."

SARAH GALLO
@thefivefoottraveler

When I visited Ranthambore National Park in India during a 2018 vacation with my mom and grandpa, I saw tigers in the wild for the first time. Just outside the park, I bought a close-up painting of a tiger from Village Women Crafts, a cooperative dedicated to empowering local artisans. From the moment I saw it, I was completely drawn to the tiger's eye. It felt magnetic.

I grew up practicing martial arts and was always told to have "tiger eyes," meaning a sharp, unwavering focus. At 30 by 20 inches, the painting was too large to fit in my bag (I travel carry-on only), which meant I had to roll the paper into a tube. Making things even more complicated, I wasn't headed home—the next leg of my trip was in Indonesia—so I asked my mom to fly home to Connecticut for 15 hours with the painting tucked between her legs. Today, that painting hangs in the center of my dining room, where I pass it multiple times a day. Tigers have always been my favorite animal. I cried when I finally saw them in person, and this painting takes me back to that moment.

"I got a statement necklace that gets people talking."

JACQUI GIFFORD
@jacquigiff

I love to buy from local vendors, and Charleston, South Carolina, has a ton of small businesses. When I'm in town, I stop at a store called Ibu Movement because it champions small women's cooperatives from around the world, as far away as Kenya, Colombia, and India. The shop itself feels like a treasure chest, set above a tiny flight of steps in a building on King Street. Every time I buy a piece from Susan Hull Walker, the founder, I feel like I'm walking away with a story and also supporting great craftsmanship.

The last time I was there, I bought a pink cloth necklace made in India, featuring a series of beads with multiple strands. It's a statement piece to wear with a summer dress or white blouse. It's also lightweight, so it's easy to slip into my suitcase. I bring it on business trips—which I go on often, as the editor in chief of *Travel + Leisure*—because it instantly sparks conversation!

"My husband and I collect pottery as a way to carry on his parents' tradition and honor his late dad."

KIM TATE
@stuffedsuitcase

I love to buy small ceramic vases and pitchers whenever I travel. My in-laws started this tradition, and my husband and I decided to carry it on when we went on our first trip together—to Prince Edward Island in Canada—back in 2002.

We always look for a local pottery or art shop that has information about the pieces and the artists. On each trip, we pick our souvenir based on the size and how well it represents the destination. That first piece was a miniature pitcher. We chose it because it was made using the red clay that the area is known for.

The challenge with this type of souvenir is getting it home! I typically wrap the piece in a sock for cushioning and place it in my shoe, or I simply put it in my backpack. So far, nothing has broken! The tradition is a nice reminder of my father-in-law, who is no longer with us.

"I loaded up on honey with a meaningful story."

MARISSA STRANG
@marissa.daily

One of the best things I've ever picked up while traveling is honey from a small shop called Tenacious Bee Collective in India. I found it at a pop-up market last October. The moment I tasted it, I was set on bringing some home!

What drew me in wasn't just the flavor but also the story behind the honey. I met the owners, who told me about building the business and ethical honey farming. I also met a woman from the team who had left her village for the very first time to come to the market and showcase how they make their honey and candles.

Supporting something so local and purpose driven felt important, so I knew I'd make room in my suitcase for the four-pack no matter what.

"I bought a scarf that still gives me the warm fuzzies."

NICOLE CUETO
@thecubancarrie

I usually try to avoid making purchases that require me to find room in my luggage, because I live by the philosophy "Travel light, travel further." When I do buy things, I make sure they're wearable on the flight home. Which brings me to this wool scarf that can be worn multiple ways. It's a scarf, a shawl, and a hood! I got it during a girls trip to Helsinki last year while shopping at a Christmas market. It caught my eye because it just looked so elegant—soft, and a beautiful cream color. The booth was run by a father-daughter duo. The daughter said her father had been in the business for 40 years! I love supporting small businesses, and this scarf is special because it reminds me of the trip with one of my best friends. Plus, it keeps me warm and fashionable when I travel to cold places.

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Top Spots for Rest & Relaxation

Venture X Reveals: Global Access with Capital One

Backed by insights from *Travel + Leisure*'s World's Best Awards and *Food & Wine*'s Global Tastemakers, the Venture X card from Capital One spotlights two destinations, Amsterdam and Arizona, that offer soul-soothing escapes steeped in local beauty.

AMSTERDAM, NETHERLANDS

Tranquility by the Canals Elegant, walkable, and surrounded by water, Amsterdam is a city that moves to a gentler rhythm. Ease into the day with a bike ride through Vondelpark, then settle in at a café for a buttery croissant or slice of Dutch apple tart—always served to stay, never to go. This unhurried ritual is as quintessentially Dutch as the *stroopwafel*: two thin waffles pressed around warm, cinnamon-laced caramel, enjoyed fresh from the oven. Give it a try at favorite spots such as Lanskroon, a bakery and tea room, or De Laatste Kruimel, a cozy spot known for its waterside tables.

The Art of Slowing Down Savor a quiet moment over coffee at Bocca, a minimalist roastery where locals linger, or at Back to Black, a quaint café known for its expertly brewed espresso and authentic charm. Then retreat to **Pulitzer Amsterdam**, part of the Premier Collection from Capital One Travel, where restful rooms, tranquil courtyards, and the leafy Pulitzer Garden café invite you to stretch the morning just a little longer—perhaps with a second cup in hand and nowhere else to be. In Amsterdam, slowing down isn't just encouraged—it's baked right in.

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Spotlight on Sedona Known for its red-rock beauty and New Age vibe, Sedona is dotted with day spas and full-service retreats offering everything from energy-healing sessions and therapeutic drumming to guided nature walks designed to restore balance. It's also home to **Ambiente Sedona**, part of the Premier Collection from Capital One Travel. This resort is a striking, design-forward escape where glass-walled atrium suites and rooftop decks connect guests to the surrounding landscape. The resort's Velvet Spa offers a modern, nature-infused menu of treatments, from clay wraps to forest bathing. It's a serene space designed to help you slow down, reconnect, and leave feeling restored.

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Modern Manners Advice for Your Social Dilemmas

BY JENNA BUSH HAGER & JUSTIN SYLVESTER

Jenna with this issue's guest columnist, Justin, a hilarious cohost and spot-on advice giver

DEDRA ASKS...

A very good friend vapes in my house and car constantly. I've complained about the smell, but all she did was change the scent. It's most annoying when she's right by my ear and constantly dragging on the vape. It hardly leaves her mouth. Now that I've tolerated it for so long, I feel like it would be mean to say something. But it gives me a headache! What can I do?

JUSTIN SYLVESTER: It's never too late to speak up for yourself when you're feeling uncomfortable! If I were in your position, I would take your friend aside and let her know that you do not appreciate her vaping so close to you. You can explain that it gives you headaches and affects your health, and that you simply don't like it. One of those reasons alone is enough to ask for a change.

JENNA BUSH HAGER: Because it's happening in your house and your car, you absolutely have the right to set boundaries. You could kindly ask your friend to vape outside when she's around you. Let her know that you've gone along with it for a while because you care about her, but it's really starting to affect you. That honesty shows your love and respect for her while also respecting your own needs.

JS: If your friend refuses to stop or doesn't take your concerns seriously, you get to decide if she's worth spending time with under those circumstances. And if not, you can let her know—gently but firmly—that she should use her own car or spend time at her own home instead.

About Jenna & Friends

Jenna & Friends airs on weekdays at 10 a.m. ET. Tune in to NBC to catch Jenna with a rotating cast of guest hosts. Her fellow dilemma solvers in REAL SIMPLE will change too. This time, it's Justin Sylvester, an *E! News* cohost, a frequent cohost on *Today,* and the brilliant podcaster behind *Yestergays.*

COURTESY OF DANA SAMUEL/NBC

KIM ASKS…
I've gone to the same nail salon for a couple of years, and the owner does my nails. While she was on vacation, I had an appointment with a different lady. I really liked her technique, and the results were so much better. How do I switch without putting the new lady in an uncomfortable position or hurting the owner's feelings?

JBH: Well, this is a social dilemma for the ages!

JS: In my opinion, you really can't make the switch easily without potentially hurting some feelings.

JBH: I disagree! If you are paying for a service and prefer the results from the other technician, then you have every right to switch. It's your money and your choice! Your regular person owns the salon, so she's still making money from it. Everyone involved is an adult, and you can be honest. You could tell her that you discovered you love the other woman's style and would prefer to book with her going forward.

JS: I used to work at a hair salon, so I know the politics and the egos behind the scenes. In that world—and I imagine in nail salons too—someone would likely end up feeling hurt. If you really want to see the new technician, you should find out what days the owner doesn't work and book your appointments during that time. You can even pay in cash to keep things discreet.

"It's never too late to speak up for yourself when you're feeling uncomfortable!"

LC ASKS…
I have a friend who has very long hair, about to her chest. I mostly see her wearing it with a pin or barrette holding the top back. It's all one length. She is an attractive woman, and I know she would look so great with a fresh and modern haircut with some layers. She could still keep it long! We're not the closest of friends, but we share a lot. How do I suggest a new look?

JBH: Honestly, I don't think you can. Unlike in *The Princess Diaries* or *Clueless*, you can't just give people unsolicited makeovers in real life.

JS: Don't tell that to a gay, because we don't believe that. What you can do is wait for her to compliment your hair, and then you can suggest your stylist. Maybe the professional could suggest a few layers to her. That way, the idea is planted without anyone being pushy.

JBH: I do think that if she directly asks for your opinion or hair advice, then it's completely fine to offer some suggestions. But unless she brings it up first, I would avoid initiating that kind of conversation.

JS: Wouldn't it be so much fun if we could just go around giving everyone makeovers, though?

KELSEY ASKS…
My neighborhood's houses are all very close together (cottage-style), and two of my neighbors like to walk through our patio to get to another neighbor's house rather than walking on the sidewalk or access road. We recently put up cameras and now have video evidence of them walking through every week, which is even more than we thought! Should I bring it up and ask them to stop, or just let it be to keep the peace? We don't have an HOA to oversee these things.

JS: You've got to keep the peace.

JBH: I agree. In this case, I would let it go. They're not damaging your property or doing anything malicious—they're just walking through. If you trust and like them as neighbors, then I would ask: How much does this really affect you?

JS: As soon as you bring it up, it's probably going to create tension, and no one likes tension in the neighborhood. It only makes for mess and drama.

JBH: Exactly. There's a reason we all watched *Desperate Housewives*!

JS: Also, I watch a lot of *Dateline*, and let me tell you, it always starts with the neighbor crossing the yard.

HAVE AN ETIQUETTE QUESTION?
Hover your phone's camera here to submit your question for Jenna and a friend, or email them at **modernmanners@realsimple.com.**

FIRST PERSON

What It Feels Like to Be Diagnosed with Breast Cancer

Singer-songwriter Tracy Bonham got the call no one wants to receive on a Friday night. Here's how she took the news—and everything that followed.

AS TOLD TO LISA FREEDMAN

Illustrations by Sandra Rilova

I hung up and went to the dining room. I had an open mouth, and I looked at them with shock in my face. I said, "That was the doctor. She just told me I have breast cancer."

LOOKING BACK, I guess I knew something was wrong. I'd actually felt a little lump about a year and a half earlier. It was really hard to find, and I didn't flag it because it never showed up on mammograms. As so many women have been told, I have dense breasts; there are a lot of benign cysts in there, and you can feel them, so I didn't think anything of it. But there I was, in 2024, wrapping up a terrible divorce. I was on my ex-husband's insurance, and I needed to see as many doctors as I could before it was cut off. I had also been pretty sick with a lot of intestinal stuff—a wild bout of colitis and then this infection called Helicobacter pylori. Just awful stuff that caused me to lose about 14 pounds in two months.

I was so tired of all the doctors. I had my regular mammogram coming up, but I needed a break. I called to reschedule, and the woman on the phone asked if there had been any changes. Normally I would say no. I don't know what made me say yes. I just had this mentality of being super thorough. I figured this was my time to speak up. I felt so stupid saying it, though. I trusted the previous mammograms! To my surprise, the woman said I'd need a referral for a diagnostic mammogram. I didn't even know what that was. (It's a more detailed X-ray.) My first reaction: I didn't want to bother my doctor with this paperwork. She's busy! I eventually realized that was a silly concern women often have, and I called to "bother" her.

I scheduled the special mammogram, but I wasn't freaked out. I was just like, *OK, we're doing this! Let's go check it out.* I went into get-it-done mode, figuring it was probably nothing. After that, it took a while to get the results; I was checking the portal regularly and wasn't seeing anything, and that started to frustrate me. I emailed my doctor and made phone calls. They'd say the lab needed to talk to the doctor and the doctor needed to talk to the lab again. It was a lot of back and forth. I think it went on for two weeks, which is an eternity when you're waiting. And it was January, which we all know is the worst month.

Then, on a Friday night, I was with my boyfriend, Rene. His mother and her friend were visiting from out of town, and we were about to go to dinner when I got a phone call. I recognized the area code and knew it was the doctor. Oddly, I didn't have a pit in my stomach at all. I answered robotically. She said, "Hi. I hate to be giving you this news." I froze. I just stood still. She said, "We don't have the full pathology report. I'm sorry to tell you this, but you have invasive carcinoma."

At that moment, I went onto another plane of existence. It was not panic. It was not a freak-out. I've been told I'm very good in a crisis (not so much with the small stuff). This was proof. I hung up and went to the dining room, where Rene's mother, who I love, was sitting with her friend. I had an open mouth, and I looked at them with shock in my face. I said, "That was the doctor. She just told me I have breast cancer."

They were so present, so calm. They asked me some questions. I told them I didn't really have any more information. Rene's mom is a breast cancer survivor, so I felt a lot of comfort from her. I wouldn't know if it was stage 1 or 4 until later. Still, it never crossed my mind that I could die. I was looking at someone who had beaten this. My own mom is also a survivor!

I went downstairs to tell Rene. I'm still kind of amazed at the strength I somehow conjured. We sat down on the couch, and I held his hand and I just said it so matter-of-factly. From this different plane. Like I was being held by the universe. I was stepping up to a place where I wish I could exist all the time, honestly, where I was very present, very OK with what was happening. Not in self-pity mode at all. We still went to dinner. We made a toast to living our best lives and, though the meal is a bit of a blur, I remember that it was almost beautiful.

I wrote this in my journal that week, while I waited for my follow-up: "I haven't gotten the pathology report, so I don't know the severity of my situation yet. Regardless, I know I am one of a million women with a new breast cancer diagnosis. This is nothing new at all, unfortunately. How many women have new diagnoses? How many people are wondering if they might be next?"

I told myself I wouldn't worry until there was something worth worrying about. I still had my 13-year-old son to tell, but I didn't want to burden him until I had more information. So it was business as usual that week. I'd pack his lunches, get him to school, make dinner. A week after the call, I went in to see the doctor, and she had the full report. Lobular breast cancer. She got out her pen and paper and started

drawing what it looks like, and she was like, "Good news: stage 1." She gave me the growth rate—18%. So it was growing, but it wasn't off the charts. She then started talking about the different drugs we'd explore.

It was a weird thing. I was almost like, *Oh, stage 1 is boring.* It doesn't make any sense. It's not a rational thought. I did *not* want it to be any worse. The thought was probably due to an endorphin high or whatever it is when you're in shock. And possibly some ugly part of my ego that wanted a story to tell. Mostly, I had a feeling of *It'll be fine. I'm a trouper.* My best friend had just been diagnosed with stage 4, and this was not that. I knew my odds looked good.

There was a moment when I did break down. Around two weeks in, I was lying in bed with my boyfriend, and I said, "Wait a minute. My body has something malignant in it and that's not OK, and this makes me mad, and why do I have to deal with this?" I had an angry cry. It was not fair. I come from a long line of women who hold too much stuff in, and I always had this story in my head that I would eventually make myself sick. This, I decided, was the reckoning.

My doctor and I came up with a plan. It meant more testing and more waiting. I was 57 years old, so before they decided what drugs to give me, they wanted to do a bone density scan because the meds could deplete bone mass. The waiting was tricky. I was thinking about that 18% growth rate and what it meant. I wanted to get this thing out of me as soon as possible. Finally, we scheduled the surgery, and that's when I told my son. His body tightened, his eyes bulged. But he was a champ, and I reassured him that we had caught it early.

I feel so fortunate to be able to say that it's out. My surgeon was tremendous and got it all. I had a lumpetomy and a lymphadenectomy, and all margins were clear. I went through four weeks of radiation, and now I take a tiny pill each day. I actually got a bunch of beautiful stickers to put on my new pill bottle each month. Looking at something very beautiful and pleasant—instead of that icky orange plastic—while taking this cancer medicine is my way of trying to change the story. My promise to myself is that, every time I take a pill for the next few years, I will lift it up to the sky, like *We've got this,* and make a little ceremony out of it.

My son recently asked me if I still had cancer. I'd heard that if you clear the five-year mark, that's when you can say you're officially cancer-free. There was no way I could have explained this to him without upsetting him. And once again, I figured there was no reason to worry about something that's just a concept.

So even though it's been less than a year, no, I don't have cancer. I do secretly worry about it coming back. My best friend, with the stage 4 diagnosis, had the same thing I had 15 years ago. They put her on the meds for 10 years, and she finished them. It was gone, and then it came back—aggressively. That's scary; I don't like that story, even though she's responding to her new treatment so well that the doctors gave her the title "no evidence of disease." She is a miracle.

Part of me still thinks I should work on my communication and not let things fester. If I get really anxious about something, I worry I'm going to rot myself from the inside out. It's always on my mind.

Also on my mind: I'm working on trusting my gut more. If I had just done the normal mammogram, like all the others, they wouldn't have seen this growth. It was underneath a cyst, and it would've grown, and then it would've been stage 2 or stage 3. I remind myself every day that my gut knows exactly what it's doing. ■

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NERDING OUT

CROWS

They're friendly, intelligent, and basically the coolest birds ever.

BY JENNY BROWN

CROWS' SINISTER reputation—a group of them is called a "murder"—likely dates back to medieval Europe, says Kaeli Swift, PhD, a scientist who writes about crows on her site, Corvid Research. "During periods of mass casualties, like the Crusades and the plague, crows would scavenge on the bodies," she explains. (Crows will eat almost anything.) "Europeans started associating them with bad omens and death." But in many other cultures, crows have long been symbols of love, wisdom, and strength, Swift notes. Scientists are finding tons of reasons crows deserve respect, not fear. "It's unfortunate that everyone thinks of Alfred Hitchcock's *The Birds*," says Kevin McGowan, PhD, of the Cornell Lab of Ornithology. "Crows are playful, creative, and caring." Let's fly through some facts.

THEY'RE NOT RAVENS

Crows and ravens are closely related members of the Corvidae songbird family (which also includes jays and magpies, among others). While these lookalikes have a lot in common, crows are smaller than ravens, Swift says. "They also sound different. Crows caw, while ravens have a deep croak. And in general, we tend to see crows more in the city and ravens more in the wild."

THEY'VE GOT BIG BIRD BRAINS

"Crows' ability to remember people is remarkable," McGowan says. "They recognize my face and follow my car because they know that's where I keep peanuts." Swift says that the New Caledonian crow, which crafts hooks out of leaves to dig insects from trees, "is one of only a handful of species, including humans, that make tools." And carrion crows in Japan figured out that if they placed walnuts in front of cars at a red light, soon the cars would drive over and crush the nuts for them! "Crows are great problem-solvers," Swift says.

THEY'RE FAMILY ORIENTED

Unlike most other bird species, crows often live with their parents for several years, helping protect and feed their younger siblings. "I've seen family groups of up to 15 crows," McGowan says. "One time a family even adopted another crow from the neighborhood."

THEY'RE PARTY ANIMALS

In fall and winter, when crows aren't busy raising their young, you may notice huge flocks (sigh, murders) gathering in trees in the evening. McGowan thinks of these roosts as crow slumber parties. "They do it to be protected from predators, help each other find food, and socialize." Nothing horror filmy about it! ■

Illustration by Sonia Pulido

2025
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HOME

A LOFTY Penthouse

Our eighth ideas home is actually *two* homes—both in One Park Row, a freshly built luxe Lower Manhattan high-rise. First up: a spacious stunner on the top floor.

BY HANNAH BAKER & ERICA LEIGH FINAMORE
PHOTOGRAPHS BY KELLY MARSHALL
PROP STYLING BY SOPHIA PAPPAS

Head over to realsimple.com/rshome2025 to see even more photos, get extra inspo, and shop the rooms.

TO BUY Corbett Lighting Emerald Chandelier, $4,528; hvlgroup.com Toron 100" Oval Mahogany Wood Dining Table, $2,499; cb2.com Monza Dining Chairs, $749 each; franceandson.com Facet 20-Piece Flatware Set, $180; crateandbarrel.com Four Hands Freda Sideboards, $2,599 each; perigold.com *Spring Abstract Diptych I* by Caryn Owen, from $34, *Stripe* by Jenna Holcomb, from $34, *Don't Go* by Derick Daily, from $35, and *Room* by Shiho Whitehead, from $28; minted.com Dupree Table Lamp, $509; rejuvenation.com Fios home internet, price upon request; verizon.com/fios Casablanca Pottery E, $175, and Pietro Boxes, from $195 each; jaysonhome.com

ST TROPEZ SOLEIL

Airy Living Room

Jason Saft @stagedtosellhome

Tasked with designing the grandest space in the penthouse (that view, though!), Jason, one of New York City's most talented home stagers, leaned into the shape of the room. "Square and rectangular pieces would interrupt the natural flow of the space," he says. "So the coffee table, rug, and sofa are all rounded to echo the curved walls." Among Jason's favorite little moments: the oversize sheepskin chair paired with a green marble side table. "I call them the odd couple, but they work so well together," he says. "Plus, sitting in that chair feels like getting a big bear hug!"

TO BUY Andre Grande Chandelier, $6,740; curreyandcompany.com Conical Overarching Floor Lamp with Shade; rejuvenation.com for similar Cara Sofa, $3,698, and Velvet Disc Pillows by Sarah Sherman Samuel, $68 each; luluandgeorgia.com Anoki 57" Oval Grey Marbled Resin Coffee Table, $1,699, Espira Round Cream Marbled Resin Side Table (by sofa), $299, and Bozzi Taupe Mongolian Sheepskin Chair and Ottoman Set, $3,998; cb2.com Mesa Side Table (by sheepskin chair); industrywest.com for similar Audie Swivel Chairs in Olive, $1,299 each; perigold.com Four Hands Oranda End Table (between chairs), $849; lumens.com Rug, designer's own *Spring Abstract Diptych II* by Caryn Owen, from $34; minted.com Not shown: Empire Occasional Chair; industrywest.com for similar Toron Dark Brown Acacia Wood Tall Pedestal Table, $599; cb2.com Dupree Table Lamp, $509; rejuvenation.com *Winter #1* by Clara Chen, from $35; minted.com Valspar PVA Primer/Sealer, $15; lowes.com

Luxe Dining Room

To fill out the extra-large wall in the dining room (previous pages), Jason used two of his go-to design tricks. First, he pushed three matching brass consoles together, anchoring the space and adding lots of storage. Next, he created a gallery wall, grouping art that felt dynamic when juxtaposed. "Try mixing pieces that are different but in similar color palettes," he suggests.

TO BUY ***Left:*** Volt 2 Electric Pizza Oven, $699; ooni.com Rohl Soap Dispenser, Lombardia Pulldown Kitchen Faucet, Air Activated Switch Button Only for Waste Disposal, and Sink Hole Cover; houseofrohl.com for info Not shown: Thicket Tray, $98; jaysonhome.com *Curves and Squares 1* and *Curves and Squares 2* by Lulu and Isabelle and *Harmony in Abundance* by Jenna Holcomb, from $34 each; minted.com Four Hands Saldino Stool, $699; lumens.com ***Below:*** Unsweetened Iced Tea and Zero Sugar Iced Tea; pureleaf.com for info

Sunny Kitchen

Just off the living and dining areas sits a kitchen with an island the size of a small bedroom. See the paneled doors on the left? They conceal the fridge, expertly organized by Tyler Moore, a.k.a. Tidy Dad, who has a controversial opinion: "Fridge doors are valuable real estate and shouldn't be wasted on condiments." Instead, he suggests keeping spreads, sauces, and such on a turntable on a fridge shelf. Bins on the doors are for stuff you reach for regularly. Snacks for kids—hummus packs, yogurts, string cheese—go in the lowest bins so little ones can grab what they want. Middle and upper bins can be used for grown-up snacks and beverages. "Make it functional, make it fast, and keep it flowing," he says. "It's not just about putting things where they fit. It's about creating a blueprint the entire family can understand and maintain."

ALL PAINT SWATCHES COURTESY OF VALSPAR

Ultra-Organized Laundry Room

Tyler Moore @tidydad

More Moore! We put Tyler in charge of this small utility space, and he created three hardworking zones: one for washing, drying, and folding; one for storing supplies and tools; and an out-the-door area (not shown) that serves as a launchpad for daily life. "It's so important to design systems that reflect the real rhythms and routines of your household," he says. Shoppable solutions for the tight space include Ikea shelves, a slim rolling cart for items that need to air-dry, magnetic containers that stick to the sides of the washer for sponges and scrubbers, and wall-mounted hooks for brooms, mops, and spray bottles. A place for everything, and everything in its place!

Warm Eucalyptus 8004-28F by Valspar

Feast your eyes on Valspar's 2026 Color of the Year!

TO BUY Boaxel Wardrobe Combination, $202; ikea.com ForceFlex 13-Gallon MaxStrength Scented Tall Kitchen Trash Bags in Bahama Bliss with Febreze Freshness; glad.com for info *Rise 1* and *Rise 2* by Baumbirdy, from $34 each; minted.com Laundry Hamper, $68, and Rolling Towel Rack, $115; theyamazakihome.com Senja Footstool Oak, $595; hatihome.com Spray Bottle Hanger, Broom Gripper, Small Utility Hooks, Medium Utility Hooks, and Large Utility Hooks; command.com for info Not shown: Micro Mini LED Scooter, $120, LED Scooterpeg, $20, Helmet in Unicorn, $70, and Helmet in Rocket, $70; microkickboard.com

Welcoming Entryway

TO BUY 3-in-1 Video Smart Lock, $280; myQ.com

Serene Primary Bedroom & Bathroom

Alvin Wayne @alvinwayne

To turn up the drama, Alvin, a New York City–based designer known for luxurious spaces, chose earth-toned plaster for his backdrop in the bedroom. "A lot of people think that if you want a wow factor, you have to go all out with a bold color. But just adding texture to the walls gives depth and interest that makes a big impact." He kept the art and furniture understated (heart eyes to that teeny-tiny print over the bed) to let the beautiful views and dappled light take center stage. "Your bedroom is the last thing you see at night and the first thing you see when you wake up, so I wanted it to feel calming and also a little invigorating," he says, adding that he was shooting for sophisticated, moody, and serene. Mission accomplished!

TO BUY Rohl Amahle Widespread Bathroom Faucet, Victoria + Albert Lussari Freestanding Soaking Bathtub, and Lombardia Exposed Floor Mount Tub Filler; houseofrohl.com for info Ultrasonic Ceramic Stone Diffuser, $50, Peace & Harmony Oil Blend, $13, and Magnesium Flakes, $12; nowfoods.com

TO BUY Roscoe Dark Oak Wood King Bed, $2,399, Camada Layered Travertine Indoor/Outdoor Side Table, $699, and Augustine 3-Bulb Glass Chandelier by Goop, $499; cb2.com Faux Potted Dracaena, from $499, Remy Table Lamp, $199, Toulon Quilt, $229, and Shams, $49 each, and Classic Cotton Velvet Oversized Lumbar Pillow, from $102; westelm.com Midnight Luxe King Mattress, $2,924; helixsleep.com *Boat Dock* by Caryn Owen, from $34; minted.com Not shown: Lyla 8' x 10' Handloomed Silver Blue Solid Performance Area Rug, $1,099, Baz Oversized Unlaquered Brass Scalloped Table with Cotton Shade, $549, Nadine Shearling Accent Chair with Marble Legs by Goop, $1,999, Clooney Antiqued Black Full-Length 48" x 72" Floor Mirror, $1,199, Melrose Tall Oak Side Table, $499, and Moti 89" Brown and White Wood Media Console, $2,299; cb2.com Landshapes by Daniel Arsham Framed Mirror, $1,500; kohler.com Fairfield Wall Sconce, $796, and Corbett Lighting Birmingham Flush Mount, $3,663; hvlgroup.com for info *James* by Mande Calhoun, from $35; minted.com

Dynamic Study & Guest Room

Mandy Cheng @mandychengdesign

Check this out. Mandy, a Los Angeles–based designer with an elevated eye, made an incredible checkerboard pattern by alternating framed mirrors with identical empty frames against a vibrant toile wallpaper. "At first glance, you're not supposed to know what's a reflection versus what's the actual wallpaper showing through," Mandy says. With the optical illusion set, she brought in an open-back bookshelf and layered in lighting from her collection with Mitzi. The end result offers plenty to look at, no matter how the room is being used.

TO BUY ***Left:*** Cowboy Toile Wallpaper by Nathan Turner, from $160 per roll; wallshoppe.com Janna Mirrors, $473 each; perigold.com Lauz Wall Sconces; mitzi.com for info Bronte Sofa in Quincy Earth, $3,900; arhaus.com Prisha Linen Lumbar Pillow, $139; the-citizenry.com Cecil Coffee Table; madegoods.com for info Fia Handwoven Tray, from $120; shoppe.amber interiordesign.com Small Brass Can, $78, *A Weekend in Europe: 23 Travel Guides* by *Cabana* editors, $48, Grotto Candelabra, $550, and Yuma Bookends, $58 each; jaysonhome.com ***Right:*** Corador Colere Rug; homedepot.com for similar Reyn Pendants, from $436 each, and Janie Floor Lamp, $1,226; mitzi.com Woodrow Bookcase, $2,200, and Dupree Swivel Chair, $1,800; arhaus.com Cursive Pedestal Side Table, $2,730; ot-tra.com for info Beeswax Taper Candle, $20 for 2; the-citizenry.com Enoch Taper Holder, $68, and *Women Photographers* by Boris Friedewald, $40; jaysonhome.com Heaton Linen Fabric by Nathan Turner, from $215 per yard; wallshoppe .com *Dream Garden Blooms 2* by Alisa Galitsyna, from $34, *Sun Kissed Meadow 2* by Arohika Verma, from $34, *Wander* by Sara Hicks Malone, from $34, *Holy Cow II* by Lying on the Grass, from $28, *These Boots* by Ann Gardner, from $28, *Bowl of Lemons* and *Peaches on a Plate* by Wendy Keller, from $34 each, and *Birds I* by Teju Reval, from $34; minted.com Large Adjustable Easel, $275, Shoal Vase, $375, Shell Box, from $20, Tall Caspian Match Striker, $88, *Surf Like a Girl* by Carolina Amell, $50, Haruki Bowl, $78, and Pasadena Bowl, $450; jaysonhome.com Not shown: Esai Taper, $68, Pila Vase, $150, Shoshana Vases, from $85 each, and Mauritius Wall Hanging, $1,495; jaysonhome.com *Lemons on a Plate, Pears on a Plate,* and *Strawberries on a Plate* by Wendy Keller, *The Pink Cat* by Zani van Zyl, *Botanica I* by Kamala Nahas, *Seeking Balance* by Rushmi, *Morning Light II* by Sonal Nathwani, *Wetland* by Field and Sky, from $34 each, and *The Saddle* by Debra Butler, from $28; minted.com

TO BUY Checker Wallpaper, $510 per double roll; poppyprintstudio.com Ridge Paintable 3D Wall Panels, $100 each; thewoodveneerhub.com *Soulmates* and *Happy Place* by Beth Vassalo, from $34 each; minted.com Collector's Cane and Wood Light Blue Kids Desk by Jeremiah Brent, $699; crateandbarrel.com Svelti Office Chair in Dusty Pink, $89; article.com (see page 14 for a discount) Moss Nightstand, $410; oeufnyc.com Pastille 1 Wayfind Sconce, $477; rbw.com Colored Pencils, $11, and Water-Based Twin Pen Set, $15; muji.us Moon Standard Bed, $799; westelm.com Geo Matelasse Organic Cotton Kids Twin Quilt, $189; crateandbarrel.com European Linen Sheet Set, $140; quince.com Patch Cerulean custom throw pillow; yarncollective.co.uk for info Midnight Luxe Twin Mattress, $1,436; helixsleep.com Velvet Window Curtain Panel, $189; cb2.com Not shown: Cirrus Pendant, $499; westelm.com Aria Short Squiggle Dresser, $1,199; urbanoutfitters.com Karu Pull, from $64; loandcointeriors.com Candace Floor Mirror, $828; anthropologie.com Hand Braided Jute Round Rug, $518; rugs.com Checkered Box, $76; shoppestdenisinteriors.com Spiral Table Lamp, $128; geturdupe.com Notebook Set, $19; riflepaperco.com Fat Lipped Planter Stand Combo, from $85; heyrooted.com

Sophisticated Kids Room

Candace Griffin @candacemaryinteriors

Behold: a room kiddos and parents alike will enjoy for years! "I was envisioning a little space that sparks curiosity and joy," says Candace, a Chicago-based designer with a knack for making playful yet sophisticated spaces—even for grown-ups. She started by pairing checkered grass cloth wallpaper and reeded panels, which she painted navy blue. To add a sense of movement, she chose on-trend curvy pieces (flip this issue over for more on decorating with curves!) that complement one another beautifully. "I love that everything worked together in the end, and it became a space that's fun and a little unexpected, with a strong sense of personality."

Loungy Den & Game Nook

Alexandra Gater @alexandragater

TO BUY *Right:* Mey Meh Wallpaper, $345 per roll; us.houseofhackney.com Decorative Wood Fireplace Mantel Ornate, $766; houzz.com Honey 4x4 Zellige Tile, $19 per sq. ft.; riadtile.com Diani Cream Onyx Wall Mirror, from $399; cb2.com Alexa by Mitzi Sconces, $292 each; hvlgroup.com Onda Chandelier, $1,504; mitzi.com Sanders Velvet Sofa, $1,099, Baarlo Coffee Table, $699, and Hallie Side Table, $199; article.com Fitz Rose Velvet Swivel Chairs, $1,999 each; cb2.com Kalida Pillow, $99, Astrid Pillow, $102, Harriet Check Lumbar Pillow, $78, and Arren Stripe Pillow, $94; tonicliving.com Lulu Judarn Empire Floor Lamp, $898; anthropologie.com Oat Custom Sheer Curtains, from $120 each; pepper-home.com Limestone Knot Decor, $35, and Natural Moon Rock Floor Vase, $60; worldmarket.com ***Below:*** Heidi Round Dining Table, $499; article.com The Dressmaker Teeny Dining Chairs, from $955 each; coleyhome.com Peacock Table Lamp Base, $70, and Capiz Table Lamp Shade, $50; worldmarket.com *Sand and Sea 1* by Shawna Urban, from $34, *City Ragtimes* by Catilustre, from $34, *True Stripes 1* by Kamala Nahas, from $34, *Luminous Stripes 2* by Rebecca Rueth, from $34, *Sketches After Cat II* and *Sketches After Cat IV* by Catilustre, from $35 each, *Bowl of Figs* by Bethania Lima, from $37, *Dream Garden Blooms 3* by Alisa Galitsyna, from $34, *Hazed Florals 1* by Baumbirdy, from $34, *Popping Peonies* by Rachel Nelson, from $34, *Room Eleven 1* by Shiho Whitehead, from $34, and *Abstract Geometry I* by Lucrecia Caporale, from $34; minted.com Not shown: Marigold Concrete Planter, from $269, and Teak Plant Stand, from $59; rejuvenation.com

Berry Brandy 1005-9B by Valspar

While there was no fireplace in the den (above), Alexandra, a Toronto-based home design pro who specializes in small spaces, knew she wanted to bring in the cozy vibes, so she hung a wooden mantel and painted it to look like the real deal. It's a focal point for sure, but the real show-stopper is the antique-rug-inspired wallpaper. "Because the natural light in this room is so generous, I chose a deeper, moodier wallpaper to create a sense of warmth," she says. She used the print as a guide when choosing the furniture (lotsa velvet!) and the cluster of art in the game nook (right). Now, about that game nook: Not only is this cleverly situated table an excellent use of a small, slightly awkward space, it's also the ideal gathering place for a game of tic-tac-toe with friends and fam.

"Feel-Good Room"

Drew Barrymore @drewbarrymore

Our cover star designed this room as a place to sit and let the busyness of daily life come to a pause. She filled the space with pieces from her Beautiful line with Walmart but still left plenty of breathing room (heh). "I wanted it to be calming and soothing," Drew says. "Like, your eyelids could just relax here."

TO BUY Beautiful by Drew Striped Linen Sofa, $384, Thyme Green and Blue Diamond Pillows, $20 each, Faux Fur Floral Pillow, $28, Round Ornate Gold Frame Mirror, $70, Bar Cart, $139, Ceramic Bubble Vase in Porcini, $13, and Scallop Stoneware Dinnerware 12 Piece Set, $50; walmart.com Kilim Collection Flat Weave Rug, from $106; safavieh home.com *Reaching Sky* by Michelle Lee, from $35, *Timeless* by Paola Benenati, from $24, and *Fusion Bouquet* by Bethania Lima, from $34; minted.com Not shown: Balance Blocks, $49, Bottle, $59, Balance Bottle, $95, Bangles, from $55 for 2, Power Ring, $89, and The Deco Mat, $99; shopbala.com Weights, $98 for 2, and Mat, $94; shopstakt.com *Lady in a Swim Cap* by Alicia Abla, from $49, *Amour* by Morgan Kendall, from $34, *Granada* by Carolyn Hunt, from $35, *Sand and Sea 2* by Shawna Urban, from $34, and *The Desert Sun Commission* by Bharti Trivedi, $400; minted.com

Rosy Sandstone 2001-7C by Valspar

Lively Terrace

Noz Nozawa @noznozawa

With a whopping 1,500 square feet of outdoor space (and some of the best views in town), this terrace was a design conundrum for Noz, who flew in from San Francisco for a look. "I was intimidated!" she admits. She figured it out by using the penthouse's *interior* to plot out different zones for its *exterior*. She set up a dining area parallel to the kitchen, a lounge spot (shown) near the primary bedroom, and a cozy firepit right at the building's dramatic apex. She shared a bit of smart advice: "If your outdoor space is going to be largely uncovered in the sun, stick with lighter-colored fabrics, as the darker ones will take on a lot of heat."

TO BUY The Patio Umbrella in Bistro Dusty Pink Stripe, $1,499, and The Clamshell Base in Antique White, $499; businessandpleasureco.com Tiburon Chaises in Perennials Basketweave White, $1,998 each; serenaandlily.com Four Hands Malta Outdoor Chaises, $2,719 each; artesanos.com Four Hands Meza Nesting Coffee Table, $999; perigold.com BeBop Low Table, $1,145; fermob.com Ulsterville Rechargeable Table Lamps, $389 each, and Troy Lighting Gareth Exterior Rechargeable Table Lamps, from $558 each; hvlgroup.com Modern Fiberstone Planters, from $199 each; rejuvenation.com Mika Ivory Striped Rug and Ivory/Black Rug, from $99 each; rugs-direct.com Evil Eye Throw Pillow, $35, Abstract Patchwork Throw Pillow, $35, Red Tufted Crab Shaped Throw Pillow, $30, and Echo Extra Wide Rust Indoor Outdoor Lumbar Pillow, $40; worldmarket.com Roman Pool Towels, $110 each; shopbaina.com Beach Towel in Bistro Dusty Pink Stripe, $89; businessandpleasureco.com Not shown: Four Hands Malta Outdoor Swivel Chair, $1,899; 2modern.com African Table by John Dickinson; sutherlandfurniture.com for info Outdoor Bag Toss Set, $1,399; lumens.com Jesse in Ocean, from $500; ernestarugs.com Sayulita Kilim Rug; worldmarket.com for similar Decorative Weights, from $80 each; subtleimpacts.com Standard Flat Blob Planter, $1,500, Oversized Modern Urn Planter, $2,500, and Yellow Nymph by Jerry Ross Barrish, $45,000; tulestefactory.com

A CHARMING Apartment

Three floors down, a bunch of crafty influencers made over a two-bedroom. We're calling it the DIY Annex.

Vintage-Filled Living Room

Drew Michael Scott @lonefoxhome

Because he's always on the hunt for great pieces, Drew began by shopping his own vintage furniture and home goods store, Lone Fox, in Los Angeles. A French sideboard, Danish chairs, and a German daybed made the cut. "I incorporated pieces from different eras and countries, giving the room an almost worldly feel," he says. He added some soft textiles and unique accessories, then he got out his power tools. He built a bespoke pedestal out of a box and tiles, made his own brutalist-inspired wall art, and wrapped a picture frame in fabric (get the steps at the end of this issue). And look closely at the curtain: As a final flourish, he added fringe trim to its slightly-too-short hem, a brilliant hack that enhanced the look for a cool $100.

Daybreak
6008-3A
by Valspar

TO BUY French Oak Sideboard with Bronze Horse Pulls (1940s), $8,500, Tile Top Coffee Table by Roger Capron (France, 1970s), $3,400, Brutalist Arm Chairs, $6,000 for 2, Antimott Beech & Mohair Daybed by Wilhelm Knoll (1950s), $3,000, Floor Lamp, $1,395, Sconce, $2,250, and Antique Stool, $495; lonefox.com for info Runyon Handwoven Jute Rug, from $249, and Veneto Marble Box in Green, $89; joonloloi.com Sinclair Round Ottoman in Balkan Ochre, $699; highfashionhome.com *Vantage Point* by Jamie Peterson, from $34; minted.com Liz Linen Drape Pleated Curtain, $60, and Joy 100% Linen Sheer Pleated Curtain, $69; twopagescurtains.com Not shown: Mid Century Danish Sofa, $7,500, and Impressionistic European Oil Painting (1940s), $5,200; lonefox.com for info Dimitra Cast Iron Urn in Bronze, $59; joonloloi.com Radner Flush Mount Light, $298; luluandgeorgia.com Jericho Global Bazaar White Upholstered Boucle Bar Stool, $771; kathykuohome.com

Storied Main Bedroom

Valeria Jacobs @rebeccaandgenevieve

Determined to make her space feel lived-in, Valeria, a Bay Area–based DIYer, added millwork, piled on loads of textures, and played around with power clashing. "I started with a color palette inspired by the surrounding buildings—earthy burnt orange, soft greens, and warm cream tones," she says. "But the real turning point was the grass cloth wallpaper. The moment it went up, the space instantly felt richer, as if it had looked like this for years instead of days." (There really is fabric everywhere, including on her handmade lampshade—see the step-by-step at the end of this issue.) When mixing patterns, pair a small-scale print with a larger-scale one so they don't compete with each other, Valeria says. For a bit of polish, she suggests unlacquered brass finishes on items like sconces, hardware, and frames. "They age so beautifully and add instant warmth!"

Ivory Essence 3006-8C by Valspar (for ceiling)

TO BUY Margueritte Grasscloth Wallpaper Natural, $86 per yard; shoppe.amberinteriordesign.com Maddie Modern Linen Slipcovered Wingback Bed, from $2,499; kathy kuohome.com Classic Cool Cotton Percale Bed Sheet Set, from $94, Pillowcase Set, from $34, Duvet Cover, from $94, Premium LoftAire Down Alternative Comforter, from $184, and LoftAire Pillow, from $54; thecompany store.com Morley Pillow, $165; shoppe .amberinteriordesign.com Midnight Luxe Queen Mattress, $2,399; helixsleep.com Weatherford Sconce, $299; rejuvenation.com Warwick Bedside Table, $1,395; sohohome.com Luna Recycled Carafe and Glass, $74; hatihome.com Elinor Floral Mughal Curtain, from $189, Everson Curtain Rod, from $149, End Cap Finial, $50, and Curtain Rings, $50 for 10; potterybarn .com Not shown: Karima Reversible Persian Rug, from $179; westelm.com Rennnsan Luka Opal Glass Globe Chandelier, $179; homedepot.com *Morning Light* by Debra Pruskowski, from $35, *Play* by Shiho Whitehead, from $34, *Three Faces* by Kirsta Benedetti, from $34, and *Elossa I*, *Elossa II*, and *Elossa III* by Jinseikou, from $34 each; minted.com Louis Wall Mirror, $299, and Dover 6-Drawer Dresser, $1,749; ballarddesigns.com Vintage Inspired Wick Trimmer, $14, Ruffled Marble Tray, $116, and Everett Marble Trinket Tray, $28; magnolia.com

Calming Office

Mallory Fletchall @reserve_home

Because our setting this year was a modern high-rise, Mallory found herself presented with a bit of a challenge, as she's used to older spaces that have original details. "My starting point was installing crown molding and a chair rail to give the room some architectural interest," says the Brooklyn-based influencer. Then, by staying true to design elements she always prioritizes—like a soft palette and vintage decor—she created a room that feels warm and friendly. Her main DIY project: turning basic Ikea cabinets into beautiful faux built-ins, complete with a marble top, brass hardware, and more of that molding. (See the steps on page F5.) While we love the whole room so, so much, we're still swooning over that thin stripe of chocolate brown paint around the top of the walls. Just saying: It's a good thing there's a fainting couch in here.

Farm-Fresh Eggs 8004-10B by Valspar

TO BUY *Above:* Enhet Wall Cabinets, $81 each; ikea.com Massey Round Cabinet Knobs, $15 each; rejuvenation.com Elfred Wall Mirror, $400; shoppe.amberinteriordesign.com *La Nube* by Jinseikou, from $34; minted.com Fabienne Daybed, $3,998, and Mariata Pillow, $128; luluandgeorgia.com Corador Mielle Rug; ballarddesigns.com for similar Brasher Pendant, $1,806; hvlgroup.com Patti Premium Belgian Flax Pleated Linen Curtain, $80; twopagescurtains.com Black Single Rod Drapery Hardware, from $55, Drapery Rod Straight Connector, $13, Metal Endcap, $13, and Bracket Open Center Single, $8; ballarddesigns.com ***Left:*** Stewart Secretary, $2,124; ballarddesigns.com Mckay Swivel Dining Chair, $898, and Colbeck Table Lamp, $549; luluandgeorgia.com Pierce & Ward Vanity Stool, $349; westelm.com Single Chukka Cordless Wall Fixture with 6-Inch Empire Shade, $245; us.pooky.com *Flock* by Yohaku Oshima, from $34; minted.com Ambrose Votive Large, $32, and Adjustable Small Easel, $195; jaysonhome.com Wood Finish Color Series Premium Oil-Based Stain in Red Oak, from $20, and Polycrylic Max Crystal Clear Protection, from $80; minwax.com for info Not shown: Vivi Stool, $599; joonloloi.com

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cuddlduds.com and macys.com

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WIN

Win (Women in Need) is the largest provider of shelter and groundbreaking services for families experiencing homelessness in the nation, serving over 12,000 individuals yearly. We transform lives, offering a dignified place to stay and individualized resources to help families achieve and maintain permanent housing.

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Drew Barrymore invites you to prioritize yourself

By Lauren Iannotti

Drew Barrymore doesn't need much of an introduction. So instead of naming the approximately 87 things she's starred in since becoming a famous actor at age 7, or talking about her eponymous daytime show that you already watch if the ratings are any indication, I'm just going to tell you how nice she is. The way she is on that show—wide open and friendly and gushing and kind—is exactly how she is in real life. When we asked her to take over a room in our REAL SIMPLE Home, she came back with an enthusiastic "YES!" and has been demonstrably fired up about it since. We offered her the gig because she's proven herself as a design and housewares savant, with a line of furniture, appliances, and other goods that habitually sell out at Walmart (this in addition to her successful production company and beauty brand). And because she is just *so* REAL SIMPLE.

During our interview, she and I bonded over *The Simpsons* (see my editor's note on page 6), being divorced girl moms (the highs and the lows), and our shared passion for using design to create a home we can be our own happy selves in—and helping others do the same. Even though she's the famous one and I was there to ask about her, as we talked, she expressed genuine curiosity about me too. She's just like that. You know. She's Drew.

Photograph by Landon McMahon

LAUREN IANNOTTI: We're so excited to have you design a room in the REAL SIMPLE Home. Your assignment was a wellness space, or as you call it, a "feel-good room." Tell us about it.

DREW BARRYMORE: I was excited when you guys threw out the word "wellness." I immediately thought of a spa waiting room, and I felt like the striped couch from our line would be just right, although it wasn't designed with that in mind. Then I went through all these paint colors, and I loved this bright kelly green that made me think of juice. But I thought, *Is that our brand?*

LI: So you went with something a little warmer.

DB: We've always had this terra-cotta vibe because of the earthiness of it. And that felt very grounding and very calming. So I chose a shade in that family—it puts me at ease, and it has enough light in it that it feels bright without being a white or cream. I wanted it to be enveloping, calming, and soothing. That was my North Star. From there, we just started layering in, and we were like, "OK, maybe a little bar cart." Because in a spa waiting room, they always have that little vat of cucumber water. In fact, I really want to bring one of those in and little bowls of nuts. Can we do that?

LI: Sure we can. We're in charge here!

DB: By the way, I haven't seen that many spa waiting rooms. I don't do that for myself often enough. I think the invitation to take care of ourselves is something we lose sight of.

LI: Agreed.

DB: So this room could be that invitation. When I was thinking about this assignment, I had to decide what wellness means to me. It means remembering to even put yourself in the mix, let alone first.

Drew's Mood Board

Here's how it started. And you can turn to page 72 to see how it all turned out.

Beautiful by Drew Brown Faux Ribbed Wood Table Lamp, $35, Fluted Ceramic Vase, $13, Round Ornate Gold Frame Mirror, $70, Striped Linen Sofa, $384, Fall Leaf Bubble Glass Vase, $7, Taper Candle Holders, $30 for 3, and Bar Cart in Warm Honey, $139; walmart.com Valspar Rosy Sandstone 2001-7C Paint, from $40 per gallon; lowes.com Timeless by Paola Benenati, from $24; minted.com

LI: The top five. Get yourself in the top five.

DB: Right? That would be huge.

LI: How do you model for your kids that it's important to be kind to yourself?

DB: I don't know if I've got that one down yet. We're all works in progress. I model how important it is to be kind to *others.* If you're not good to someone, you will not only ruin their day, but guess what: You're going to feel really bad about yourself. So nix that behavior. And I've taught them that if you clean up after yourself, you're going to have more calmness in your space. Your head is as messy as your room is. Someone said that to me, and it changed my life forever.

LI: So you're the tidy type? Me too.

DB: Yeah, messes can be cute and charming, but they can't stay there. They've got to get cleaned up so you're ready for the next mess to be made. I have one daughter who's neater than I will ever be, and one daughter who is beyond messy. But someone reminded me that I was messy when I was young. And I was like, *Oh my God, I'm expecting her to have my 50-year-old woman's standards of cleanliness!*

LI: I love a clean house, but I had to learn that when you get busy and feel overwhelmed, that's the thing you have to let go.

DB: When I get burnout from trying to mom really hard and work really hard, I go, *You know what? This isn't good.* And I know that at the end of the day, the most important thing in life is your relationships. If I'm not putting them first, then I'm on the wrong track. So I talk to my kids. And I do try to show them that the more you work on yourself, the happier you're going to be, the more your friendships will thrive. We all need tools to navigate the world, and asking for help is everything.

LI: Meaning therapy?

DB: Yes. I think about therapy the way people think about exercise, as a form of discipline. I may not have

PRODUCT IMAGES COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS

gotten my cardio levels up today, but I figured out a problem and a potential solution. I treat therapy as if it's the most basic, normal, welcomed thing. Nobody questions if someone wants to go to the gym, but somehow therapy can have a stigma. Yeah, I have a lot of cellulite, but my brain is functioning in a way that I'm not devastated about.

LI: Your brain is lean and mean!

DB: I don't have that killer body, but I can get out from under the elephant sitting on my chest, the problem that's overwhelming me. I can go into my toolbox and I can pull myself out of things.

LI: I feel like this is a good segue back to your calming, pretty room. What are we using it for?

DB: It's a place to sit and a transition. Like when you get into a meditation class and they'll tell you to let go of your day and stop thinking about the next thing you have to do. Don't think about the grocery list or what happened this morning. This room wants you to be mindful and present, which is almost as hard as putting yourself first!

LI: I love the idea of building yourself a little space for that.

DB: I once heard someone say, "Any space you give a woman, she will fill it." And I loved that. Give her a little clutch, she'll pack it full of stuff. Give her a giant suitcase, she'll fill that up. We're very good nesters. We definitely know how to fill a space—even if we're minimalists.

LI: Do you consider yourself one?

DB: Nope. Nope. I did try minimalism for a minute just to see what it was like. But I'm a bit of a hoarder, and when I tried to take things out, I couldn't see my life around me anymore. I'm always going to go for a layered look. It's who I am, and anytime I fight it, it doesn't work.

LI: So how would you describe your design style?

DB: I've tried so hard to come up with terms. People will call me bohemian or eclectic. I'll go with "downtown rustic." I like the feeling of city and country. I will always need big florals around me. I don't know if it'll ever look like I live in a home that was done by a designer. I went for a prewar place that's super funky and feels personal and warm and I love it, but my bookshelves have cracks in them because they're separating from the wall. My kids' closet is a sh*t show. It's not even technically a closet. My friends make fun of me. They're like, "She will always buy the places with no closets."

LI: You like what you like! Tell us about the stuff you're working on right now.

DB: I'm so excited because our Beautiful line is constantly expanding, from the pet products we launched in the spring to the bedding and dining room furniture collection this past summer. Designing your home can be a lot of fun, and we want to continue bringing items that customers can get excited about. Our goal is to bring a bit of joy to your home and inspire you to get creative while designing or redesigning spaces.

LI: Your lane seems to be taking really functional things and making them bright and colorful and beautiful. What keeps you inspired as a designer?

DB: If I imagine something and I can't find it, I want to make it. That really lights my fire. And then once the fire starts, it's hard to extinguish. Like when we started designing our appliance line, we wanted to bring high-level tech but with more color and happiness added to it, which is something you don't often see in this space.

LI: Speaking of lighting your fire: What's your most satisfying cleaning task?

DB: Stain removal! Bring it!

We Got Drew's Take on Some Low-Stakes Controversies

Is the five-second rule real?

The 10-second rule is real!

Is it OK to put your suitcase on the bed?

Is it *not* OK?! I'll also sit on the bed in my clothes after getting off the subway. I'm like, *Antibodies, come on in.*

Do you wear socks to bed?

Never. Not a day in my life. Nothing more claustrophobic.

Bath or shower?

It used to be bath. Now it's shower. Because there's never enough time!

Which way do you face in the shower?

I rotisserie turn, but mostly I'm outward.

Should you wear underwear all the time? (Even to bed?)

I rarely wear underwear! And my daughter Frankie will pants me as a joke. I tell her, "You're going to do this in the wrong place one day." I just don't really love underwear, and if I put some on, it's going to be really big and cottony.

Toilet paper: over or under?

I don't get what is under and what is over. I mean, I kind of do, but I've never thought about it. I will say, even if you're in a public place, when the toilet paper roll runs out, change it! Be a good person.

THESE VACATIONS ARE TOTALLY LIT

Book a literature-inspired adventure and see where the story takes you!

BY ERICA LEIGH FINAMORE & MELISSA MATTHEWS

Knowing that so many REAL SIMPLE readers (*heyyy!*) love to read as much as they love to explore, we decided to combine the two pastimes and create some page-turning book-themed itineraries. See the real-life settings that inspired your favorite tales, learn about the lives of the authors who spun iconic narratives, and write some new chapters of your own. If you're a bibliophile with a travel bug, do what you do best: Read on, and get packing!

PHOTOGRAPH BY TED CAVANAUGH / PROP STYLING BY SOPHIA PAPPAS

Travels with Charley
In Search of America
City Guide
DUBLIN
TOLL ROAD
Midwest

DUBLIN

Get thee to the Emerald Isle's capital! Once there, head directly to the Museum of Literature, which spotlights the country's many contributions to the Western canon. Exhibits are revolving, but a few mainstays include artifacts from Oscar Wilde and James Joyce. In fact, you can gawk at the first-ever copy of *Ulysses*. Next up, hit the James Joyce Centre, a museum that offers walking tours to see the city through the artist's eyes. Finally, if you're interested in checking out any of the local watering holes, we suggest the Dublin Literary Pub Crawl, making stops at four historic bars. Cheers!

OPENING SPREAD INSETS: COURTESY OF DAVID DASHIELL/THE MOUNT; GETTY IMAGES. THIS PAGE: GETTY IMAGES

DE SMET, SOUTH DAKOTA

The Little House on the Prairie does exist! In fact, you can visit three of them in this city, less than a two-hour drive from Sioux Falls. There's the Surveyors' House, where Laura Ingalls Wilder and her family spent their first winter in the Dakota Territory. There's the two-story home Laura's father built between 1887 and 1889, after she married. And there's the Ingalls Homestead (left), where she lived from ages 13 to 18. It's tailored to the next generation of *Little House* fans: Kids can make corncob dolls, drive a pony cart, and interact with (read: touch!) the exhibits.

BATH, ENGLAND

We may be prejudiced (or prideful), but Bath is a no-brainer for this list. The city's buzzy social scene inspired Charles Dickens's *The Pickwick Papers*. Mary Shelley penned much of *Frankenstein* here; immerse yourself in a multisensory museum about the book and see a plaque by the house where she wrote it. The city is also home to the Jane Austen Centre, but if you're a superfan, make the two-ish-hour drive to Chawton to tour the house where she wrote her six major novels. While there, take pics of her writing desk (above).

CLOCKWISE FROM TOP LEFT: COURTESY OF TRAVEL SOUTH DAKOTA; COURTESY OF LUKE SHEARS FOR JANE AUSTEN'S HOUSE; COURTESY OF HOTEL MONTELEONE

NEW ORLEANS

The Big Easy's eclectic culture has an intrique all its own. And it's inspired many important authors over the last century—like Ernest Hemingway, Anne Rice, Eudora Welty, and Truman Capote. All four frequented the iconic Hotel Monteleone in the French Quarter. (One historian estimates that the hotel appears in more than 170 stories and novels!) Stop in and sip a Sazerac at the Carousel Bar & Lounge (left), but leave time to visit Community Book Center, the city's oldest Black-owned bookstore. It features works by Black authors such as Brit Bennett, Octavia Butler, and Margaret Wilkerson Sexton.

MONTEREY, CALIFORNIA

Famous for its wine and stunning coastline, Monterey is also a literary gem. *Treasure Island,* written by Robert Louis Stevenson, was inspired by nearby Point Lobos State Natural Reserve, according to local lore. Make time for a hike and a photo op at China Cove (below), known for its emerald waters, then drive 30 miles northeast to Salinas to celebrate John Steinbeck. Start at the National Steinbeck Center, a museum and memorial dedicated to the author. Finish at the Steinbeck House—his childhood home, which was converted into a restaurant in 1974. Pop in for lunch (the menu is full of Blue Zone–inspired dishes) or to browse the gift shop, where the family's original furniture is on display.

CHARLESTON, SOUTH CAROLINA

Celebrate the hauntiest time of year and walk the stomping grounds of a young Edgar Allan Poe, who lived in the area while enlisted as a soldier. Stay in the charming historic district (right) and take a day trip to Sullivan's Island, where Poe was stationed at Fort Moultrie. Though he was there only about a year, he used the island setting in his short story "The Gold-Bug." Explore the fort on your own or with a guide (a pre-tour fact: the structure was built during the Revolutionary War to help protect Charleston from Britain), then check out another island highlight, the Edgar Allan Poe Library, which reopened in March of this year after undergoing some major renovations.

LENOX, MASSACHUSETTS

You probably knew that Edith Wharton could craft a compelling narrative, but did you know that she was also an impeccable designer, gardener, and host? See for yourself by visiting the Mount, her 113-acre home (now a museum; right) where she wrote some of her most famous works, including *The House of Mirth*. Continue your prose pilgrimage and head a short seven miles north to Pittsfield to visit Arrowhead, Herman Melville's home-turned-museum. It's where he wrote *Moby-Dick*! One last stop if there's time: about 60 miles away, in Amherst, sits the Emily Dickinson Museum.

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what to cook

RECIPES FOR REAL LIFE

Canada produces nearly 75% of the world's supply of maple syrup.

THE STAPLE

MAPLE SYRUP

It's not just for the breakfast table.

BY JENNA HELWIG

WHAT IT IS

This sweet elixir is made from sap drawn from the mighty sugar maple tree, boiled and filtered. The color noted on the label—golden, amber, dark, or very dark—indicates when the sap was harvested, explains Ana Maria Huertas Buitrago, a syrup buyer (a real job!) for Whole Foods Market. The deeper the shade, the later the harvest and stronger the flavor.

HOW TO USE IT

In addition to the obvious pancake sitch, swap it for honey in salad dressings, mix it with vinegar in sweet-and-sour glazes, and use it to boost iced coffee and cocktails.

FOOD STYLING BY JULIAN HENSARLING; PROP STYLING BY PRISCILLA MONTIEL

Photograph by Morgan Hunt Glaze

5 Easy Dinners

#1 / Ravioli Soup with Sausage

ACTIVE TIME **35 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **35 MINUTES** SERVES **6**

✓Freezable ✓Big Batch ✓One Pot

- 2 Tbsp. olive oil
- 1 lb. ground Italian pork sausage
- 6 cloves garlic, finely chopped (about 2 Tbsp.)
- 1½ cups chopped yellow onion (from 1 onion)
- 4 cups lower-sodium chicken broth
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1 24-oz. jar marinara sauce
- 1 9-oz. pkg. refrigerated cheese-filled ravioli (such as Buitoni or Rana)
- 4 cups packed torn curly kale (from 1 bunch)
- ½ cup heavy cream
- ¼ cup chopped fresh basil, plus more for garnish

HEAT oil in a large pot over medium-high. Add sausage; cook, breaking it up using a wooden spoon, until browned, 5 to 8 minutes. Transfer to a medium bowl using a slotted spoon.

ADD garlic and onion to pot. Reduce heat to medium and cook, stirring constantly, until softened, 3 to 4 minutes. Stir in broth, 2 cups water, salt, and marinara sauce, scraping bottom of pot to release any browned bits. Bring to a boil over medium; cook, stirring occasionally, for 5 minutes. Add ravioli; cook, stirring often, until tender, about 5 minutes.

REDUCE heat to medium-low. Add sausage, kale, cream, and basil to pot; cook, stirring often, until kale is wilted and sausage is heated through, about 5 minutes. Garnish with basil.

PER SERVING: 570 Calories, 38g Fat (14g Saturated), 108mg Cholesterol, 4g Fiber, 23g Protein, 34g Carbs, 1,361mg Sodium, 4g Added Sugar

Recipes by Tricia Manzanero Stuedeman

Photographs by Morgan Hunt Glaze

FOOD STYLING BY JULIAN HENSARLING; PROP STYLING BY PRISCILLA MONTIEL

#2 / Sun-Dried Tomato, Squash & Spinach Frittata

ACTIVE TIME **30 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **55 MINUTES** SERVES **4**

✓Vegetarian ✓Gluten-Free

- ⅔ cup sun-dried tomatoes in oil, chopped, plus 2 Tbsp. oil from jar (from a 7-oz. jar), divided
- 2 cups chopped butternut squash (from a 13-oz. pkg.)
- 1¼ cups thinly sliced red onion (from 1 onion), divided
- 2 5-oz. pkg. baby spinach (about 10 cups), divided
- 1¼ tsp. garlic powder, divided
- 1¼ tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 7 large eggs
- ¾ cup half-and-half
- ½ cup crumbled spreadable cheese (such as Boursin)
- 1½ tsp. fresh lemon juice (from 1 lemon)

PREHEAT oven to 350°F. Heat 1 tablespoon tomato oil in a 10-inch nonstick ovenproof skillet over medium-high. Add squash; reduce heat to medium and cover. Cook, stirring occasionally, until fork-tender, 7 to 10 minutes. Add 1 cup onion; cook, stirring often, until starting to soften, 1 to 2 minutes.

STIR in 1 package spinach; cook, stirring, until wilted, about 5 minutes. Remove from heat and stir in tomatoes, 1 teaspoon garlic powder, and ¼ teaspoon salt.

WHISK eggs, half-and-half, and ¾ teaspoon salt in a large bowl. Pour mixture into skillet and sprinkle with cheese. Cook over medium until edges are set, about 5 minutes. Transfer to oven and bake until center is just set, 22 to 25 minutes.

WHISK lemon juice and remaining 1 tablespoon tomato oil, ¼ teaspoon salt, and ¼ teaspoon garlic powder in a large bowl. Add remaining package spinach and ¼ cup onion; toss to coat.

SLICE frittata into wedges and serve with spinach salad.

PER SERVING: 473 Calories, 35g Fat (15g Saturated), 378mg Cholesterol, 5g Fiber, 18g Protein, 22g Carbs, 922mg Sodium, 0g Added Sugar

#3 / Shaved Brussels Sprouts Salad

ACTIVE TIME **20 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **30 MINUTES** SERVES **4**

✓Quick ✓No-Cook ✓Vegan

- 1 large shallot
- ⅓ cup extra-virgin olive oil
- ¼ cup white wine vinegar
- 2 Tbsp. honey or maple syrup
- 2½ tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 4½ cups shaved Brussels sprouts (from 1¼ lb. whole Brussels sprouts or 2 [12-oz.] bags)
- 1 15.5-oz. can chickpeas, drained and rinsed
- 1 8.8-oz. pkg. refrigerated cooked beets (such as Love Beets), cut into ½-in.-thick wedges (about 1⅓ cups)
- ⅓ cup chopped fresh mint, plus more for garnish
- 2 cups roughly crushed pita chips (from a 16-oz. bag)

FINELY chop half of shallot to make 1 tablespoon. Thinly slice the other half to make ¼ cup sliced shallot. Save any remaining shallot for another use.

WHISK oil, vinegar, honey, chopped shallot, and 1½ teaspoons salt in a large bowl.

ADD Brussels sprouts, chickpeas, beets, mint, sliced shallot, and remaining 1 teaspoon salt to dressing; toss to coat. Let stand at room temperature for 10 minutes. Stir in pita chips and garnish with mint.

PER SERVING: 437 Calories, 22g Fat (3g Saturated), 0mg Cholesterol, 10g Fiber, 12g Protein, 55g Carbs, 1,280mg Sodium, 9g Added Sugar

- 1½ cups sushi rice
- 2 Tbsp. seasoned rice vinegar
- 1½ tsp. kosher salt, divided
- 1 lb. peeled and deveined large shrimp
- 1 cup halved and sliced English cucumber (from 1 cucumber)
- 1½ tsp. toasted sesame oil
- 3½ Tbsp. mayonnaise
- 1½ tsp. sriracha
- 1 0.16-oz. pkg. sea-salt-roasted seaweed snacks, thinly sliced
- 1 medium avocado, chopped (about ⅔ cup)
- ¼ cup pickled red onion (from a 16-oz. jar, such as Mezzetta)
- Toasted assorted sesame seeds and thinly sliced scallion, for garnish

COOK rice according to package directions. Stir vinegar and 1 teaspoon salt into rice using a fork. Divide rice among 4 bowls. Refrigerate until room temperature, 10 to 15 minutes.

MEANWHILE, bring a large pot of water to a boil over high. Stir in shrimp; remove from heat and let stand, uncovered, until pink, about 3 minutes. Drain and transfer to a plate. Refrigerate, uncovered, until completely cool, 15 to 20 minutes.

WHILE rice and shrimp cool, stir together cucumber, oil, and remaining ½ teaspoon salt in a medium bowl. Stir together mayonnaise and sriracha in a separate medium bowl.

STIR chilled shrimp into sriracha mayonnaise. Top rice bowls with shrimp mixture, cucumber mixture, seaweed snacks, avocado, and onion. Garnish with sesame seeds and scallion.

PER SERVING: 528 Calories, 20g Fat (3g Saturated), 148mg Cholesterol, 4g Fiber, 21g Protein, 64g Carbs, 1,170mg Sodium, 3g Added Sugar

#4 / Spicy Shrimp Sushi Bowls

ACTIVE TIME **30 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **45 MINUTES** SERVES **4**

✓Make Ahead ✓Gluten-Free ✓Dairy-Free

#5 / Crunchy Taco Wraps with Chicken

ACTIVE TIME **35 MINUTES** TOTAL TIME **35 MINUTES** SERVES **4**

✓One Pan

- 2 cups shredded rotisserie chicken
- 1½ Tbsp. taco seasoning mix (from a 1-oz. envelope)
- 5 10-in. burrito-size flour tortillas, divided
- ¼ cup prepared salsa con queso
- 4 5-in. yellow corn tostadas
- ¼ cup sour cream
- 1¼ cups shredded iceberg lettuce (from 1 head lettuce)
- ½ cup chopped plum tomato (from 1 tomato)
- ¼ cup chopped pickled jalapeños (from a 16-oz. jar)
- 4 tsp. neutral oil (such as canola), divided
- Salsa and/or ranch dressing, for serving (optional)

STIR together chicken, ½ cup water, and taco seasoning in a medium nonstick skillet. Cook over medium until sauce is thickened, 3 to 5 minutes.

PLACE 4 tortillas on a clean work surface. Spread 1 tablespoon salsa con queso into a 5-inch circle in center of each tortilla. Top with chicken mixture. Place 1 tostada on top of each chicken layer. Spread 1 tablespoon sour cream over each tostada. Top with lettuce, tomato, and jalapeños.

CUT remaining tortilla into quarters. Place 1 quarter on top of lettuce mixture on each tortilla. Fold 1 edge of bottom tortilla up and over fillings. Fold in remaining edges until filling is completely enclosed.

WASH and dry skillet. Heat 1 teaspoon oil in skillet over medium. Add 1 wrap, seam side down; cook, gently pressing down, until golden brown and seam is sealed, 1 to 2 minutes. Flip and cook until golden, 1 to 2 minutes. Repeat with remaining oil and wraps. Halve and, if desired, serve with salsa and/or ranch.

PER SERVING: 542 Calories, 21g Fat (6g Saturated), 77mg Cholesterol, 5g Fiber, 31g Protein, 57g Carbs, 1,281mg Sodium, 0g Added Sugar

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BETTER FOR YOU

APPLE PIE COOKIES

The classic fall treat gets a little bit healthier and a lot more dunkable.

BY TRICIA MANZANERO STUEDEMAN

ACTIVE TIME **25 MINUTES**
TOTAL TIME **50 MINUTES**
MAKES **36 COOKIES**

- ½ cup refined coconut oil, at room temperature
- 1 cup (213 g) packed light brown sugar
- ¾ cup unsweetened applesauce
- 1½ tsp. pure vanilla extract
- 1 large egg, at room temperature
- 2 cups (178 g) quick-cooking oats
- 1 cup (120 g) all-purpose flour
- ⅔ cup (75 g) whole-wheat flour
- 1½ tsp. ground cinnamon
- 1 tsp. baking soda
- 1 tsp. kosher salt
- 1¼ cups ¼-in. pieces chopped apple (from 1 large apple, such as Honeycrisp), divided

PREHEAT oven to 350°F. Line 3 rimmed baking sheets with parchment paper. (Or bake in batches.)

STIR oil in a large bowl until smooth. Add sugar; beat with an electric mixer on low speed until just combined, 1 to 2 minutes. Increase speed to medium and beat until fluffy, about 2 minutes. Beat in applesauce, vanilla, and egg until combined, about 30 seconds.

ADD oats, all-purpose flour, whole-wheat flour, cinnamon, baking soda, and salt to oil mixture. Beat on low speed until almost combined, about 30 seconds. Fold in ¾ cup apples.

SCOOP dough into 2-tablespoon mounds and place at least 1 inch apart on prepared baking sheets. Press remaining ½ cup apple into tops of dough mounds.

BAKE until edges are set and tops look dry but centers still seem slightly soft, 8 to 12 minutes. Let cool on baking sheets on wire racks for 10 minutes. Serve warm or transfer cookies to racks and let cool completely, about 30 minutes.

FOOD STYLING BY JULIAN HENSARLING; PROP STYLING BY PRISCILLA MONTIEL

Photograph by Morgan Hunt Glaze

PROMOTION

simple extras

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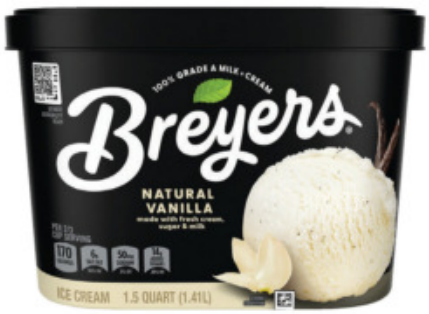

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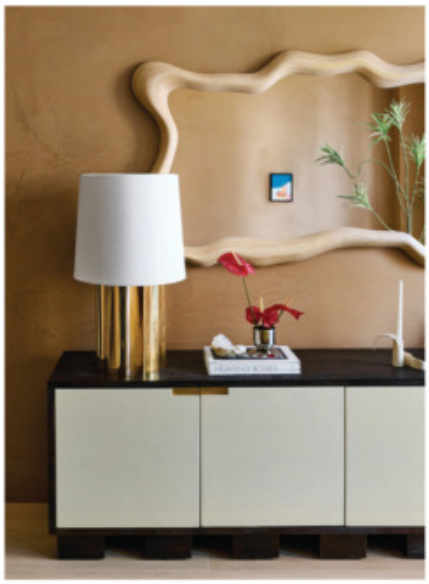

EXPERIENCE THE REAL SIMPLE HOME

Tour the eighth annual REAL SIMPLE Home this fall at One Park Row in Lower Manhattan, featuring a two-story penthouse and a two-bedroom apartment—both decorated by 10 talented designers. Don't miss your chance to see these stunning spaces in person!

September 19–21 AND September 26–28.

Schedule your tour now!

realsimplehometour.com

A portion of the proceeds will go towards Win NYC.

MINOR ISSUES, MAJOR OPINIONS

Is It OK to Crack Your Knuckles?

Everyone's got thoughts! We collected yours, then called on the experts to settle the debate once and for all.

BY NAOMI BARR

46% of Instagram commenters say it's fine to crack away!

Readers say...

Bring on those pops!

"Cracking them since 1996 and my fingers don't look anything like an arthritis patient's."

CHRISTI_CGRAY

"Yes!"

SEMUR76 (AND MANY OTHERS!)

"It just feels so good. Once you pop, you can't stop."

ARIELKNUTSON

Gah, no!

"Not in front of others."

JHMAHER10

"No. The noise is annoying. You wouldn't burp in public. Why would you crack your knuckles in public?"

JAMBLES5

"Not sure it's the best for the tendons."

CDALY97

The experts say...

Yes—it's generally fine. Despite what moms around the world might say, those satisfying pops won't damage your joints, nor will they lead to arthritis, says rheumatologist Eric Ruderman, MD, a professor of medicine at Northwestern University's Feinberg School of Medicine. In an attempt to put the myth to rest back in the day, one California doctor undertook his own very informal study: He cracked the knuckles on his left hand twice a day, every day, for 50 years, leaving the ones on his right hand alone. Eventually, in 1998, he reported his findings. Ready? No arthritis, and no difference between the two hands!

Broader research published in the *Western Journal of Medicine* in the '70s also concluded that there's no link between knuckle cracking and arthritis. While a 1990 study reported that knuckle crackers were more likely to have hand swelling and reduced grip strength, a 2017 study found no correlation between knuckle cracking and grip strength. Our experts say they've never seen long-term complications, though one has a warning. "Don't push your joints beyond their natural range of motion," says Erin Nance, MD, a New York City–based orthopedic hand surgeon. "You could wear your joints down, causing stiffness or swelling."

People typically crack their knuckles (or knees or backs or necks) because they get a sense of relief or satisfaction from it, says rheumatologist Kanika Monga, MD, assistant professor of clinical medicine at Houston Methodist Hospital. "The relief and sound likely come from the release of pressure and the breaking of gas bubbles that accumulate in the lining around the joint," she explains. So where did the decades-old arthritis association come from? Ruderman has a guess: "I tell my patients, 'Your mother always told you not to crack your knuckles—because she didn't like the sound of it.'"

Illustration by Greg Clarke

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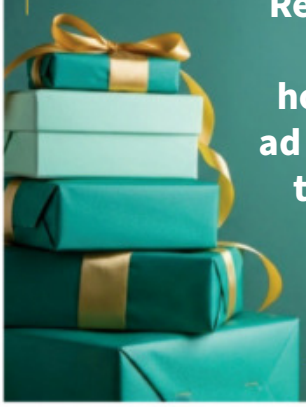

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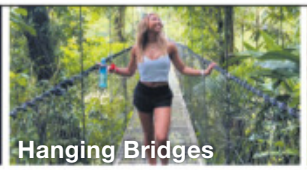
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FROM CLUTTER TO CALM

Keep your home stress- and mess-free with these three tips for tackling a new organization project.

WHEN IT COMES TO maintaining a beautiful, clean, and peaceful home, it's all about the little things you do behind the scenes to keep it all running smoothly, and the tools you can trust to make these tasks easier. From organizing a messy closet to cleaning out the kitchen pantry to decluttering junk drawers, learn how Glad® ForceFlex MaxStrength Drawstring Trash Bags—a sponsor of the 2025 REAL SIMPLE Home—can help.

1. BREAK DOWN TASKS INTO MANAGEABLE SUB-TASKS.
Section out your larger organization project into smaller categories that you can complete in hour-long sections, whether that's divided up by the physical space or the types of belongings you're decluttering. Sometimes what keeps us from starting a big cleaning project is the overwhelming final goal, so celebrate the small wins to keep your motivation up for a fresher, calmer home.

2. SORT BELONGINGS WITH A SYSTEMATIC APPROACH.
Designate three distinct bins for things you'll keep, throw out, or donate before diving into a big clean-out. This will help streamline the process and keep the space orderly from start to finish. Use 13-gallon Glad® ForceFlex MaxStrength Drawstring Trash Bags for your bins—the 2X stronger top* and 25% more durable material* will help ensure that transporting your sorted belongings is a clean and quick experience.

3. DON'T FORGET TO CLEAN WHILE YOU DE-CLUTTER.
While you're cleaning out, make sure to clean up, too! Keep tools like dusters, disinfecting sprays, and a vacuum nearby while you're organizing a closet or pantry so that you're beginning with a clean slate. Cluttered surfaces collect extra build-up that should be wiped down and deep-cleaned before you place fresh belongings back on them. Pro tip? Toss garbage in a Glad® ForceFlex MaxStrength Drawstring Trash Bag to trap odors and eliminate smells.

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REAL SIMPLE

Smart Ideas to Steal

from the REAL SIMPLE Home

You flipped the issue over! Yay! Now let's take a closer look at some of our designers' coolest trends and projects.

BY HANNAH BAKER & ERICA LEIGH FINAMORE

Get out your measuring tape and warm up your glue gun! Inside, you'll find a few super-easy DIYs and loads of inspo.

PROP STYLING BY JOSEPH WANEK; INSET: KELLY MARSHALL

Photograph by Carson Downing

Set Your Pantry Up for Success

USE ORGANIZERS

Tyler Moore (a.k.a. Tidy Dad) wasn't afraid to call in reinforcements. He added acrylic containers, a riser, and baskets to maximize space and create order. Just come up with a plan *before* you go shopping.

AND HANG SOME OF 'EM

By putting self-adhesive containers along the inside of the pantry door, he found storage space in an area that typically goes to waste. Each container holds a specific treat: granola bars, sandwich crackers, jerky, etc.

KEEP THINGS VISIBLE

You can't use what you can't see, Tyler warns. "It's all about accessibility, visibility, and making routines as smooth as possible."

MARK WEINBERG; PROP STYLING BY VERONICA OLSON

Embrace Anything with Curves

Candace Griffin's kids room—and, honestly, nearly every room in the Home—proves that wavy lines are making a splash right now.

Candace Floor Mirror, $828; anthropologie.com

Spiral Table Lamp, $128; geturdupe.com

Cara Sofa, from $3,698; luluandgeorgia.com

Fitz Rose Velvet Swivel Chair, $1,199; cb2.com

Aria Short Squiggle Dresser, $1,199; urbanoutfitters.com

Look Back to the Past

Everything old is new again! This trend is seen all over the Home, but it's *especially* apparent in Jason Saft's living area. In this open space, we spy the return of at least five retro styles (hey, '70s!). He brought in soft shearling and luxe velvet, stone furniture, shiny metallic sideboards, grand brass chandeliers, and curvy swivel chairs. (See a more pulled-back pic on page 62 of the main issue.) "I'm a believer that beautiful and well-crafted things will always come back in style," Jason says. "Whether it's clothing, furnishings, or food, looking back helps you move forward to something new and gorgeous."

Try a Fun Color Combo

Mustard + Burgundy

INSPIRED BY ALEXANDRA GATER'S DEN

Essential Footed Bowl, from $30; hawkinsnewyork.com Graham Velvet Floor Lamp, $329; tovfurniture.com Monte Dining Chair, $499; cb2.com Essential Gingham Pillow, $78; hawkinsnewyork.com

Navy + Moss

INSPIRED BY MANDY CHENG'S STUDY

Sadie Sconce, from $349; rejuvenation.com Silas Bookshelf, $429; urbanoutfitters.com Loops Rug, from $1,145; nordicknots.com Willow Tree Pillow Cover, $160; chloeandolive.com

Sky Blue + Camel

INSPIRED BY ALVIN WAYNE'S BEDROOM

Bistro Side Table, $248; serenaandlily.com Atoll Rectangular Mirror, from $279; ballarddesigns.com Lento Leather Lounge Chair, $449; article.com Mardones Velvet Sofa, $1,999; cb2.com

KELLY MARSHALL; PROP STYLING BY SOPHIA PAPPAS (2); PRODUCT IMAGES COURTESY OF MANUFACTURERS

Try Something Slightly Crafty

PLEATED LAMPSHADE

Transform a plain lampshade with about a yard of fabric and some hot glue. It's a go-to trick for Valeria Jacobs, who shares the steps: Cut your fabric so it's taller than your shade, wrapping it around the rims slightly. Fold pleats all around the top, securing each with a dot of glue as you go. Then do the same around the bottom. If you want, add a narrow strip of fabric along the top and bottom, like a hem.

FABRIC-COVERED PICTURE FRAME

Start with an inexpensive picture frame and end with a bespoke one! Take a cue from Drew Michael Scott and use spray adhesive to affix fabric to the front of a frame. Add hot glue along the sides and back, and tuck the corners like you're wrapping a present. Then wrap the mat, cut off the excess, and reassemble. "It's such a simple way to enhance a photo or print," he says.

IKEA "BUILT-INS"

Who doesn't love a good Ikea hack? Mallory Fletchall recommends Besta cabinets to fake the look of built-ins. To steal her trick, assemble the cabinets (as many as you need to fill a wall) and slide them into place. Then attach molding to the doors with heavy-duty double-sided tape, glue, or a nail gun. Go over the whole thing with a good coat of bonding primer, then paint it your color of choice. Next, pop on a cut-to-size top that spans all the units (consider marble or wood that's painted to match). Add knobs. Finally, step back and admire your handiwork.

CLOCKWISE FROM FAR RIGHT: KELLY MARSHALL. PROP STYLING BY SOPHIA PAPPAS; CARSON DOWNING. PROP STYLING AND CRAFTING BY JOSEPH WANEK (2)